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Official Records

82nd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 13 February 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim .... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Beck (Palau), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Thematic debate entitled "Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work"

Agenda items 48, 54 and 116 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Sustainable development

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/644)

The Acting President: Since we still have 74 speakers on the list and must finish today, I beg speakers to respect the five-minute rule.

I now give the floor to Ms. Rina M. Tareo, representative of the Marshall Islands.

Ms. Tareo (Marshall Islands): The Republic of the Marshall Islands wishes to fully align itself with the statement made by Tonga, on behalf of the small island developing States of the Pacific Islands Forum, and Grenada, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

Many of the world's low-lying small island nations — the nations most vulnerable to climate impacts — have spent decades trying to bring the urgency of climate change to the attention of States Members of the United Nations. With its average elevation at only three metres above sea level, the Marshall Islands truly values the personal leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon regarding this issue and the commitment of General Assembly President Kerim to finally giving climate change the attention it so richly deserves within the United Nations system.

However, we must not fool ourselves into thinking that climate change can be addressed only by generalized discussion. Instead, the global community needs the help of a more effective and coherent United Nations system to turn broad hopes for climate change into action-oriented results. Too often, paperwork, studies and well-meaning United Nations agency intentions have failed to translate into real benefits.

The United Nations system must recognize that adaptation is an inherently limited long-term solution for certain low-lying Member States, such as the Marshall Islands. While there are important mid-term adaptation strategies, such as the Micronesia Challenge, which aims to conserve our vulnerable coastal resources by 2020, rising sea levels will likely present questions which are without legal precedent in the global community.

With fragile coastal ecosystems as the basis of our food security and traditional land tenure as the foundation of our cultural identity, my country must ask the global community some difficult questions regarding threats to our development, security and

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fundamental freedom. What becomes of our national boundaries and cultural traditions, our legal identity and our homeland? In what ways might major emitters bear responsibility under international law?

The global community cannot continue to avoid these questions. In working to support the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations, the United Nations system can also facilitate productive diplomatic discussion on issues of human rights and national sovereignty central to the Charter of the United Nations.

My country suggests that an important role for the United Nations system rests in assisting Member States with domestic implementation of the UNFCCC and other climate change goals. The need for assistance has never been more urgent. Major greenhouse gas emitters are struggling to integrate climate strategies with economic development goals. Domestic climate change initiatives are time-consuming to develop, are rarely linked with urban or industrial growth programmes at the national or local level, and rarely allow for public involvement.

With extreme urgency, the Marshall Islands calls attention to the August 2007 plenary statement of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization which called upon the global community to examine the potential interlinkage between climate goals and existing national or local environmental laws, in particular the environmental impact assessments — a legal norm unilaterally adopted by over 100 Member States. We urge the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to carefully study the ability of environmental impact assessment laws to address climate change and, as appropriate, work closely with national experts to build this capacity.

Our relationships on climate change with key partners have already allowed my country to take great strides in further reducing our own small amount of greenhouse gas emissions, even though we are not an annex I country. However, decision makers who have the greatest opportunity to make an impact on implementing climate change goals and populations who are at greatest risk are too often excluded from meaningful interaction within the United Nations system.

Innovative cross-sectoral partnerships open up direct lines of communication between populations most affected by climate impacts and the decision makers who are able to reduce those impacts. A useful example is the 2007 Statement of Shared Action between the Marshall Islands and King County, including the City of Seattle in the State of Washington. We encourage the United Nations system to take a more direct role in playing matchmaker and encouraging these direct relationships between key decision makers and highly vulnerable populations.

Oceans and coastal areas are critical for the survival of many small island developing States. We call upon the United Nations system to address the potential for the conservation of coral reefs to be considered as an eligible carbon sink under the Clean Development Mechanism. In addition, we call upon the United Nations system to examine the link between climate change impacts, including coral reef bleaching and ocean acidification, and the food security gained from commercial and subsistence fisheries, and to alert decision makers of its findings.

The Marshall Islands is strongly concerned that the new global climate change funding mechanisms under discussion with the World Bank may compete with existing and newly established funding channels for adaptation. It is important that the recipient nations also be afforded an opportunity to participate in governance of these funds and that the United Nations system ensure that climate change adaptation funding continues to be addressed with transparency.

The narrow window for global action is rapidly closing. My nation urges both the United Nations system and Member States to meet this extraordinary challenge by turning rhetoric into results.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Daniele D. Bodini, Permanent Representative of San Marino.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): I would like to thank President Kerim for organizing this important event. We strongly believe that climate change is a critical issue on the agenda of the General Assembly, and we greatly appreciate his effort to keep our attention focused on it. I would also like to commend the Secretary-General for, to quote his own words, having "moved climate change up to the top of the agenda" and for his inclusive report entitled "Overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change"

(A/62/644). We were impressed by the attendance of a great number of world leaders at the High-level Event on Climate Change last September. This broad participation reflects the determination and, more important, the moral commitment of all Member States to resolve in an equitable manner such an enormous challenge.

The Fourth Assessment Report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change provided us with further evidence of climate change and its causes. It presented a practical basis for adaptation and mitigation strategies. The Bali Action Plan represents a promising road map to guarantee a coordinated and comprehensive multilateral action to address this emergency situation. We are looking forward to the December 2009 conclusive meeting to be held in Copenhagen.

Climate change is affecting all countries without distinction — whether small or large, developing or developed — but we can all agree that developing countries are facing a greater emergency and need increased financial support and strengthened capacity-building. We concur with General Assembly President Kerim's statement that we need to reconcile the economic aspirations of developing countries with the necessity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We also believe that a universal strategy to address climate change is our only solution and that the entire process has to be coordinated under the leadership of the United Nations system.

Development and economic growth can and must move forward together with environmentally friendly policies. The negative consequences of climate change represent a concrete obstacle to reaching the Millennium Development Goals, a threat to international peace and a cause of humanitarian emergencies. We cannot succeed without effective strategies at all levels, balancing environmental need, energy consumption and economic growth.

Technological progress in new and renewable sources of energy is a key element of the entire process and should be one of the main objectives of our efforts. Partnerships between Governments with fiscal and/or direct incentives and the private sector can significantly contribute to focusing on investments in effective alternative technologies and ensure universal access to know-how and expertise.

San Marino is finalizing new legislation promoting energy efficiency with the use of new and renewable sources of energy and introducing water, sanitation and water waste management programmes to reduce water consumption. This regulation will include new criteria and incentives to promote alternative clean technologies.

We are confident that we can significantly modify the energy and environmental patterns of the entire country and reduce San Marino's CO_2 emissions as well as its dependency on energy imports.

Finally, we want to underline the importance of environmental education and respect for natural resources as the basis of our social policies. In fact, as has been pointed out several times, to succeed we have to raise the awareness of private citizens, business communities and Governments.

While there is no guarantee that we will be able to slow down global warming, it is clear that all of us have to remain committed to curb this catastrophic outcome. Reversing this trend would be the greatest legacy for our future generations.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nirupam Sen, Permanent Representative of India.

Mr. Sen (India): At the outset, permit me to express our appreciation of President Kerim's initiative and leadership on this important issue. We associate ourselves with the statement made yesterday by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) remains the only comprehensive framework to deal with climate change issues, a fact reaffirmed during the recent Bali meeting. Efforts to address climate change, including this thematic debate, must support and feed into the ongoing processes under the UNFCCC rather than create parallel processes. Such efforts should also be based on the provisions and principles of UNFCCC, particularly the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Other United Nations system entities can assist, as per their mandates, in the effective implementation of the provisions, commitments and action plans of the UNFCCC. Bertolt Brecht once said that it is sometimes a crime to talk about a tree because it implies a silence about injustice. For developing countries, the imperative therefore is poverty eradication and development. The United Nations is best placed to ensure that addressing climate change does not impede this objective.

The issues of technology and financing are vital for effectively addressing climate change. We would have liked to see a detailed coverage of these issues in the background documents provided for this debate.

Current mechanisms to promote cost-effective and affordable access to advanced clean technologies for developing countries have not been very successful. The United Nations must play a leading role in this area by promoting joint research; country-driven approaches incorporating existing capacities; adoption and diffusion of technology; greater focus on adaptation technologies; and, most important of all, a facilitative, intellectual property rights regime that balances rewards for innovators with the common good of humankind. The issue may be difficult: the United Nations must grasp the nettle and not bypass it in background documents.

Similarly, there is an urgent need to provide new and additional financial resources to developing countries for addressing climate change, without diverting resources meant for development. The role of the United Nations cannot merely be limited to assisting developing countries in formulating policies to enhance climate change-related investment flows. It would be myopic to believe that such national efforts would be sufficient to raise the large resource flows required. Instead, the United Nations must assist in the development of financial mechanisms and funds for effective resource flows into developing countries.

On mitigation, the United Nations, rather than identifying mitigation strategies by developing countries, should focus on how developed countries can sharply reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. In this regard, the United Nations should play an active role in advocacy by urging developed countries to meet their commitments and to take further ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reduction commitments. The United Nations should also identify various ways and means by which developed countries can take action in mitigation. The developed countries must reduce their emissions so that the developing countries can breathe and grow.

In the gospel of Saint Thomas, discovered and authenticated not so long ago, it is stated that blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. In terms of climate change, one can add that blessed are the poor for they have saved the earth. Perhaps it would now be time for the rich to do something in the same direction.

Climate change must be addressed in the context of sustainable development, rather than attempting to integrate it with trade, social, economic, security, migration or humanitarian issues. We would also caution against using discussions on climate change to influence other ongoing United Nations processes like system-wide coherence or international environmental governance.

While the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination can play a role in coordinating United Nations system efforts, we would like to see much greater Member State oversight.

Greater emphasis on South-South cooperation in areas like adaptation would be useful. India would be happy to share with our friends in the developing world the science and technology expertise and capacities that India has built over the years.

India is very conscious of the challenge of climate change and the serious impact it will have on all of us. Yet, like other developing countries, we have to ensure accelerated and sustained development so that millions of poor people can secure a better life. This will inevitably require increased energy consumption.

Nevertheless, we have stated that even as we pursue development, our per capita greenhouse gas emissions would at no stage exceed the per capita greenhouse gas emissions of developed countries. Our per capita emissions of 1 ton per annum are only a fourth of the world average, and our cumulative historical emissions of 23 tons are a fraction compared to the 1,100 tons emitted by many developed countries.

At the inauguration of this debate on 11 February 2008, Mayor Bloomberg of New York City asked China and India to accept world energy efficiency standards and said that at a future date New York taxis would be run on flexi-fuel. All polluting factories around Delhi have been closed down, and all Delhi buses and taxis have switched to using compressed natural gas. Thus, we have done what New York still has to do.

As for energy efficiency, a recently released World Bank study shows that India's fossil-fuel-related carbon dioxide emission per dollar of GDP is the same as that of Japan and Germany, and newer Indian plants in steel, cement, aluminium and paper have energy efficiencies at the global frontier.

Furthermore, recently India's Ministry of Science and Technology has introduced a technology based on ocean thermal energy conversion that provides clean drinking water from seawater at affordable prices.

India is also entirely sensitive to the concerns of small island developing States that arise out of climate change and will join vigorously in efforts to assist them.

Because of shortage of time and because I touched on this issue during the panel discussions and, above all, because the Chairperson of the Alliance of Small Island States made such an eloquent presentation on the subject yesterday, I do not want to take up more time. However, as he aptly said, "no island should be left behind", and he quoted John Donne, a seventeenth-century poet, who wrote that no man is an island unto himself. In other words, international solidarity is crucial.

Another seventeenth-century poet, a contemporary of his, Andrew Marvell, wrote the lines, "at my back I always hear/Time's wingéd chariot hurrying near". So, on the one hand is the question of international solidarity; on the other, the urgency — and here I think the United Nations is best placed to focus on the needs of the vulnerable, the countries of Africa and the small island developing States and also on the urgent need for a proper enabling environment that is on the intellectual property rights agenda.

Actions by developed countries to sharply reduce their emissions and assist developing countries with financial and technical resources are the key to successfully combating climate change. We look forward to the United Nations and the world working meaningfully towards this goal.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Habib Mansour, Permanent Representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Mansour (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I am pleased to commend the President for his initiative in organizing this thematic debate on climate change, which serves to support the implementation of the Bali Road Map and Action Plan. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his overview report (A/62/644) of the activities of the United Nations in relation to climate change.

Before I address some of the issues to which my country attaches special importance, I would like to associate myself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Antigua and Barbuda, Cameroon and Algeria on behalf of, respectively, the Group of 77 and China, the Group of African States and the Arab Group.

The theme of this debate, namely, "Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work", is a cross-cutting one that encompasses all the threats posed by the problem of climate change as a whole. It also goes to the heart of the issue of development. The challenges are multiple and diverse. They are multilateral, national, present and future, economic, technological, financial, human and even civilizational in nature. Climate change is the clearest manifestation of the rapidly expanding and inequitable phenomenon of globalization. Moreover, the issue of climate change raises many paradoxes. It is telling, in fact, that the regions of the world least responsible for climate change are also the most vulnerable and the most exposed to it, and therefore the least able to adapt to it. For them, adaptation is not just a choice; rather, it is crucial to survival.

However, the difficulty that developing countries, and especially the least developed ones, face in adapting to this environment is an additional handicap, especially as their resources are already insufficient to meet the challenges of economic and social development and reducing poverty. Therefore, combating climate change cannot be to the detriment of development. The challenge posed by climate change requires a technological capacity to respond and a level of economic and human development that many countries, especially the poorest, do not currently have. There is therefore a need to strengthen cooperation of every sort in order to promote sustainable development in the three main areas, namely, economic development, social development and environmental protection.

It is precisely in that regard that the idea of common but differentiated responsibilities, which is the basis of the Framework Convention, comes fully into play. Applying that principle in effect is to respond to the economic, financial and technological imbalances and inequalities that exist, as well as those regarding the ability to adapt to the negative current and future impacts of climate change.

The outcome of the Bali Conference made it possible for the international community to take a step towards putting in place a framework, timetable and negotiating process. Like many other delegations, my delegation believes that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change should continue to be the main platform for the post-Kyoto negotiations. We also believe that the questions of financing and technology transfer should continue to be central issues. In that regard, it is important to diversify and increase sources of financing to address adaptation, so that the efforts made through that instrument can rise to the needs and expectations.

Tunisia, a country whose economy is linked, among other things, to water, agriculture, tourism and its coast — which are all greatly impacted by climate change — has placed the overall protection of the environment, and combating climate change in particular, at the centre of its development policies. Adaptation is the primary national priority in Tunisia. To that end, Tunisia has put in place a whole set of institutional, regulatory and technological measures. It has also adopted environmental plans covering Tunisian industry, financial indicator mechanisms in the area of energy regulation, the promotion of renewable energy, rational ecological waste management, the reduction of greenhouse gases, forest development and improving air quality. Coordination mechanisms at the national level have begun to function, thanks to the support of various agencies and funds or the financing mechanisms established by the Convention and its Protocol. In addition, horizontal efforts have also been made in the areas of training and raising awareness.

Nevertheless, although necessary, the national effort is not enough. International support and various forms of cooperation — bilateral, regional and multilateral — are still required to strengthen the development process and thereby combat and prevent the documented or potential dangers of climate change.

In the spirit of emphasizing the value of cooperation and international solidarity, and with a view to contribute to the worldwide effort to find alternative operational methods of cooperation on the issue of climate change, as well as to strengthen international cooperation in the financial, technological and scientific spheres, from 18 to 20 November 2007, Tunisia hosted an international conference at Tunis on the theme "International solidarity to protect Africa and the Mediterranean region from climate change". The work of the conference culminated in the adoption of a declaration calling for international solidarity to protect Africa and the Mediterranean region from the adverse effects of climate change, as well as a plan of action calling for the establishment of cooperation projects. That is very much in line with the recommendations of the thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was held in Bali in December 2007. It should also be noted that the Tunis declaration was also adopted by the Tenth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held at Addis Ababa from 31 January to 2 February 2008.

In conclusion, I would say that the challenges posed by climate change are of concern to the entire international community. Combating the adverse effects of climate change will only produce results if they are part of a genuine global alliance based on common but differentiated responsibilities, international financial and technological cooperation and the principle of solidarity.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Collin Beck, Permanent Representative of the Solomon Islands.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands): Before making my statement, I would like to make an observation. We speak so passionately of climate change, and yet the Hall is half empty. I think of what the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States said yesterday: that we have spoken of climate change for 20 years and yet we have not been heard, because we refuse to listen to each other. I just wish to mention that for the record.

I now turn to my statement.

I would like to thank the President once again for convening this gathering on climate change. First of all, my delegation would like to associate and align itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda, on behalf of G77 and China, the representative of Bangladesh, on behalf of the least developed countries (LDCs), and the representative of Grenada, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, as well as by the representative of

Tonga, in my own region, on behalf of the Pacific island States. My delegation wishes to contribute to this debate in its national capacity.

Solomon Islands takes note of the Secretary-General's report (A/62/644) and commends the President and the Secretary-General for keeping climate change warm on the agenda during this cold winter. My delegation assures them of our support as we explore the need to make the United Nations more effective and relevant in dealing with climate change challenges.

The report shows that the magnitude of climate change has outgrown the existing capacity of the United Nations system. In the process, the principle of equity and vulnerability has lost ground within the system. Some countries receive more attention than others. That shows that small is a curse rather than a blessing, as projects submitted are either too small to be considered or too expensive to manage. The fragile environments of small island developing States and LDCs are therefore left to face the full brunt of global warming. We look to partners to take this into consideration and hereby thank all those who have assisted us, including Italy, for establishing special direct arrangements with the Pacific island States and call on others to follow suit.

For small island developing States and LDCs, climate change is inevitable. Climate change, sustainable development and poverty are interlinked for southern hemisphere countries, as has been mentioned in many other statements made before this one. From the perspective of my delegation, the report does not consider the links between the States and the United Nations in detail and makes no mention of Member States where there is no or limited United Nations presence.

Most United Nations bodies do not have regional or subregional offices, and this lack makes for a weak and distorted partnership between the United Nations and Member States. There is also failure to discuss terms in structural implementation of the economic opportunities climate change has to offer, including financial and technological initiatives for LDCs and small island developing States in the adaptation and mitigation sectors.

At the moment, from the perspective of my delegation, there is no clear direction as to how the United Nations should deal with immediate, medium and long-term climate change challenges. It is well equipped to provide technical support and analytical data but falls short where ground activities are concerned. There is now internal migration in low-lying islands, in particular in my country, Solomon Islands, and this has received little attention.

The lack of a United Nations central climate change agency is also a concern to my delegation. While we have the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, it remains a Convention secretariat. We need a stronger United Nations that will ensure that agreed international commitments and decisions are carried out without fail. My delegation would like to restate the position we expressed during the Security Council debate on climate change last year in April, namely that we must place climate change on an equal footing with other security issues.

Solomon Islands would also like to register its view that Governments are now burdened with the proliferation of climate change reporting obligations due to the multitude of meetings on the subject. It would be helpful for all climate change and environment issues to come under an umbrella-type arrangement whose purpose would be to maintain a coordinated and efficient way of dealing with the issue. This will ensure that no country gets left behind because its special needs are not taken into consideration.

My delegation congratulates the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on undertaking climate change training for its staff and hopes that a more diversified United Nations staff will strengthen United Nations outreach to its membership and enhance appreciation of the challenges encountered by all countries, both big and small.

Solomon Islands would like to see the report go further and discuss countries with small and narrow foreign-owned economies with a small private sector. Much of organized civil society within our country is externally funded. The majority of the most vulnerable Member States are located on the periphery of the international system.

It is our hope that here at United Nations Headquarters the Small Island Developing States Unit within the Division of Sustainable Development and the Office of the High Representative can be strengthened to tackle climate change issues in their interaction with the LDCs. These offices should ensure that internationally agreed frameworks outlining the special situation of both small island developing States and LDCs are implemented throughout the United Nations system. Without such action, the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals will remain a remote possibility.

Given the above challenges, this meeting offers the United Nations System Executives Board for Coordination the opportunity to change its approach and enable the United Nations to do more, deliver more rapidly and be more consistent in meeting climate change challenges.

We need to support the Bali Road Map by translating current commitments into action. It is about implementation and the implementation commitments made in particular by annex I parties. We should try to avoid a situation in which we in effect endorse the idea that loss of life is acceptable, simply because of our lack of collective action.

We must also try to preserve multilateralism by supporting established mechanisms. It is disheartening to see partners funding other multilateral institutions instead of the mechanism that we agreed to in Bali. The success of the Montreal Protocol provides hope that with strong leadership from annex I parties, a cleaner world is possible.

As indicated by the President's address on Monday, it will cost the world 1 per cent of its annual GDP to take corrective action. We must also look at existing United Nations assets and technology and have them providing functions related to climate change. I say this because we have technologies such as those within the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization that can be used in an early warning system. Thus, there is technology which is already available, including satellites that we can use to assess the health of our environment.

I close by quoting some words from our Secretary-General's acceptance speech: "the true measure of success of the United Nations is not how much we promise, but how much we deliver to those that need us most". That must be the guiding principle of the United Nations in addressing climate change. It presents a starting point for and gives a sense of purpose to our noble institution.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Byrganym Aitimova, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): The evidence of recent research enables us to assume that, in addition to the nuclear danger, today's world encounters the challenge of climate change. Climate change on Earth does not recognize State borders, nor is it dependent on national, political or religious factors.

Kazakhstan acclaims the leading role of the United Nations in dealing with the issues of global environment and climate change. A series of high-level events on climate change held in 2007 indicates the resolve of the world community to undertake measures to tackle and reduce the consequences of this current challenge facing all of us.

Resolve has been further demonstrated by the deliberations of the Member States leading to the Bali Road Map. We express our hope that parties will reach compromise on all disputes and duly conclude an international agreement on an effective framework programme for the post-2012 period.

Let me express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (A/62/644), which contains a comprehensive assessment of the situation, and an overview of the most important initiatives and contributions of almost all organizations and agencies of the United Nations system towards combating climate change.

The delegation of Kazakhstan welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General on adopting decisive measures aimed at slowing or preventing climate change in the interest of sustainable development. In this regard, we believe the United Nations should be a mediator in bringing essential assistance to developing countries in the domain of innovative technology transfer through such world financial institutions as the World Bank and the Asian Bank of Development. Such measures would stimulate the development of clean technologies and the creation of new jobs.

Despite the fact that Kazakhstan has not yet concluded its ratification process with respect to the Kyoto Protocol, it greatly contributes to the global effort to combat climate change. In his annual address, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan stated that the country will concentrate its efforts on introducing energy-saving and environmentally clean technologies. He also appealed to citizens and businesses around the country to work towards saving electricity.

Despite the growth of its industries, industrial greenhouse emissions decreased from 4.7 million tons in 1990 to 3 million tons in 2006. By 2024, we plan to cut carbon emissions per unit of gross domestic product to about one third of their current level, as well as to increase our use of alternative energy sources such as solar, wind and geothermal by a multiple of at least 250.

Ecological licences and regional emission quotas will enter into force in my country in 2008, in accordance with international practice. In addition, in order to cut emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, a quota-trading mechanism will be introduced in various industries.

The delegation of Kazakhstan supports the documents that have been adopted on reducing emissions from deforestation and the degradation of tropical forests, which are responsible for up to 20 per cent of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions.

A project under the aegis of our head of State called "Green Country" has been started in Kazakhstan and has gained the full support of our society at all levels. Through that programme, millions of trees are planted every year and efficient measures are put in place with regard to wildfire protection and combating illegal deforestation. A distinctive feature of the initiative is the active participation of young people. The purpose is to foster a humane attitude towards the environment through a national spirit based on ethics and patriotic education for new generations. In that context, we propose that the United Nations call on the younger generations of the world to take the lead in greening their environment, thereby making their own contributions to tackling climate change.

We fully support the need to build partnerships between government, the private sector and the United Nations with regard to the work to deal with the issue of climate change. During last December's meeting of the Council of Foreign Investors, which is the communication platform between the State and business, Kazakhstan's leadership recommended to foreign investors that they work on the sustainable development programmes in my country by implementing our clean production strategy. A proposal to set up a contest among oil companies to secure State "green oil" certificates for the best achievements in environmental protection was the first such undertaking in the world, which can become a useful example to follow.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mrs. Isabelle F. Picco, representative of Monaco.

Mrs. Picco (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank President Kerim for organizing this debate which, from the very first day, has taught us important lessons about global cooperation in combating climate change.

We are all aware today of the urgency of overcoming that challenge, for we know that the future could be much darker than that envisioned by the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It seems clear that the approach we must take should attempt to reconcile climate change with development. It is not just a matter of coherent efforts, but also one of responsibility, equity and solidarity.

The world's poorest countries, which produce the least amount of greenhouse gases, are unfortunately the most affected by the effects of global warming and the most powerless to combat it. Building capacity is a crucial tool in ensuring effective efforts in the area of mitigation and adaptation.

With regard to its international cooperation policy, Monaco is helping to strengthen the national capacities of developing countries — especially as regards air pollution monitoring, combating desertification, water supplies and forest conservation.

Last September, His Serene Highness Prince Albert II expressed his commitment to the country by setting clear objectives for the Government in the area of carbon emissions. Accordingly, voluntary measures have been adopted in all aspects of urban life, especially in the areas of transportation and the environment.

As has already been pointed out, the coherence and effectiveness of our future efforts in responding to the challenges of climate change necessitate that we put in place both traditional and innovative types of partnership. We see a potential to develop partnerships with private industry, especially in the renewable energy sector. We in Monaco are especially attentive to every innovation and initiative in that field.

The Prince Albert II Foundation, which Prince Albert personally introduced at the high-level meeting organized by the Secretary-General last September, supports numerous projects in this area, in particular efforts related to second-generation biofuels and exploiting the use of biogas. In that regard, it would be desirable for Governments and the United Nations to promote partnerships with the philanthropic community. The economic power of that group is significant, but very few of its resources are devoted to combating climate change.

The Adaptation Fund, which functions under the World Environment Facility, should be supported and strengthened. The use of clean development mechanisms should also be further pursued, while ensuring that the operational and technical complexity of such mechanisms do not result in impeding their implementation.

Lastly, we look forward with interest to the draft resolution to be introduced by the facilitators, the Ambassadors of Mexico and Switzerland, on the issue of a new international ecological governance regime. In that regard, I cannot conclude without mentioning the tenth special session of the Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum, which is to be held in Monaco from 20 to 22 February. The Government of the Principality is pleased to welcome the many participants at the ministerial level.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The international situation is today becoming increasingly characterized by the international community's growing awareness of the serious challenges posed by global climate change and the need for joint action to address them. Russia has traditionally been an active participant in the international climate process. At all of its stages, we have consistently advocated for consolidated efforts in this area by all countries without exception.

In that regard, we welcome the efforts by the Secretary-General and the current President of the General Assembly to convene an informal thematic debate for an overview of the United Nations system's implementation activities in relation to climate change, which can contribute to strengthening the role of the United Nations as the main platform for coordinating international cooperation on climate change in the light of the positive impetus provided by the recently concluded thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the third Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, held in Bali from 3 to 15 December 2007.

We very much appreciate the outcomes of the Bali meeting — first of all, the consensual adoption of the Bali Action Plan. In accordance with the Plan, comprehensive negotiations are to be held in 2008 and 2009 in the context of the Framework Convention to agree on a post-Kyoto international regime on climate cooperation to go into effect in 2012.

It is also of fundamental importance that the Bali meeting reaffirmed the primacy of the Framework Convention as the universal mechanism to achieve the ultimate goal of stabilizing greenhouse gases at a level safe for humankind and the biosphere. The achievement of that global objective can be greatly facilitated through more efficient use of the potential of the entire United Nations system, within which constant and diverse work in that area is being carried out within the mandates of the organs and agencies of the Organization.

The proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/62/644) are aimed at reviewing and optimizing United Nations activities in this area. In our view, many of these proposals are of real interest and deserve careful consideration.

Furthermore, we view as reasonable the attempt to organize future climate work within the United Nations system on the basis of the strategic areas of the UNFCCC, that is, adaptation, mitigation, technology and finance, including, in particular, the sectors of energy, transport and health.

We believe that, if approved by all participants of the climate process, measures along these lines can produce a significant synergy effect and become an important complementary element in the overall global strategy for addressing climate change.

For our part, we would like to mention the proposals on strengthening scientific research capacities in the climate change area, coordinating United Nations activities at the sector and thematic levels on the basis of such already established groupings as UN-Energy, UN-Water, UN-Oceans, carrying out a comprehensive analysis of links between biofuels and food security, and increasing the role of forest ecosystems in the climate process.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Roble Olhaye, Permanent Representative of Djibouti.

Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti): We thank you, Sir, and the Secretary-General, for initiating and closely coordinating the various conferences, events and thematic debates on climate change that have been held over the past year. Each passing day brings increased public awareness about the ever-pressing and inevitable consequences of climate change, the challenge to sustainable development which we confront today.

Last September, the high-level event underscored the commitment of Member States to effectively tackle climate change and led to the Bali Action Plan in December — an action plan which highlights the crucial need to launch negotiations for the achievement of a comprehensive global agreement by the end of 2009. This plan identified the key areas for action: adaptation, mitigation, technology and financing.

The Secretary-General then issued a comprehensive report in January 2008. It was entitled "Overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change" and recognized the central role of this Organization in meeting this global challenge. The theme for this debate — "Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work" — is not only timely, but very relevant.

Indeed, our present debate strives to create conditions for public-private partnerships on climate change, with the United Nations at the centre of coordinating actions by all stakeholders towards advancing global efforts to combat climate change.

Both directly and indirectly, therefore, the United Nations, through its promotions, conferences, conventions, events and debates has become an indispensable major force in highlighting the multifaceted challenge of climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has brought inestimable credit to the United Nations, driving home the inescapable truth that global warming, climate change and atmospheric pollution are upon us and must be fully addressed in order to reverse their negative impact.

The more we permit the main pollutant, carbon dioxide, to flow into the atmosphere, the more our air, climate and environment deteriorate. We must rein in the pace of this deterioration; in fact, we must reverse it. Mandatory curbs are required. The United Nations must keep emphasizing that these hazards are the result of human activity, that, in fact, they are caused by humankind.

Beyond the physical and environmental effects brought on by global warming, climate change will have critical implications for international peace and security, migration and shortages of resources, together with the inevitable ensuing humanitarian crises. Furthermore, according to the IPCC, the pace of deterioration around the world due to greenhouse gas emissions and resulting climate changes have exceeded predictions — with arctic sea ice and glaciers melting faster and global sea levels rising faster than had been forecast.

As has been consistently noted and underscored by the IPCC, Africa will be the continent hardest hit by climate change as it experiences water scarcity, crop failure, forced migrations, droughts, floods, heat waves and declining animal populations. In the words of our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, "[t]oo often, where we need water we find guns instead".

This is the world we live in, a world of misplaced priorities, missed opportunities and neglected implementations.

More than likely, the developing world will be forced to focus primarily on adaptation to the effects of climate change. Mitigation, technology and financing, while part of the correction process, cannot be the strong points of the developing world for the obvious reason that it lacks resources in each area.

Adaptation itself necessitates widespread, costly changes. Some adaptations may be modest and low-tech. However, population relocation, migration, water-desalination plants, plant and crop adaptation and rebuilding, reinforcing or relocating infrastructure, which will all be part of the process, will not be cheap.

In combating carbon emissions and the attendant pollution, we will have to develop alternative sources of clean, reliable and affordable energy for use by populations everywhere. The United Nations is called upon to promote public-private partnerships in research and development in this endeavour, including training and transfer of technology.

At the heart of most of these measures will be the issue of financing. The United Nations must serve as a conduit for information in all areas of emission control and the reduction of atmospheric pollution. Programmes should be developed and financing for them found, and the design of suitable projects should be recognized.

Not to be overlooked in the area of funding are the possible key roles of investment and management participation. Joint ventures should be organized where feasible. With the advice and oversight of the United Nations, there should be no hesitation about such arrangements, particularly where there are few alternatives.

As we have seen with the Bali Conference, which led to the Bali Action Plan, while adaptation needs vary, there is little question that there must be a substantial increase in available resources to effect adaptation.

The United Nations must be ready with a wide range of strategic objectives. Perhaps its primary objective must be to act as a focal point, a primary source of unbiased and reliable information, a coordinator, a promoter and an advocate of the necessary steps and measures to address the harmful effects of climate change. The public will require an informed, objective and accurate picture of what is being done to adapt to climate changes and what will be necessary to reduce and reverse those changes.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Saviour F. Borg, Permanent Representative of Malta.

Mr. Borg (Malta): The President of the General Assembly has described climate change as unquestionably the biggest challenge facing humanity in the twenty-first century. The Secretary-General has described climate change as "one of the most complex, multifaceted and serious threats the world faces".

Last September, our heads of State and Government, acknowledged and confirmed that climate change is indeed happening and is largely caused by human activity. Indeed, 20 years ago, the General Assembly already viewed climate change as a common concern of humankind.

The President's dynamic contribution to this priority issue on the international agenda continues to ensure, as rightly stated in his background paper, that the General Assembly is the appropriate forum to discuss the climate change challenge in a comprehensive way, and thereby can support the ongoing negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Malta associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the States members of the European Union. My delegation also welcomes the holding of this thematic debate, especially as it is being held just a few weeks after the Bali Conference.

While the Framework Convention must be the central negotiating forum, the United Nations system as a whole must play a strong supporting role. Here, I would like to recall the proposal made by Malta's Prime Minister during the general debate last September. From this Hall, he called for a more cohesive and concerted approach by all international institutions to address the issue of climate change and its repercussions. Malta's Prime Minister also stated that it was imperative that all actors involved in climate-risk reduction take a unified stand on a strategy and action plan to strengthen the resilience of affected countries in building their capabilities to face and adapt to the adverse impact of climate change.

My delegation is therefore pleased that the report (A/62/644) of the Secretary-General on an overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change indicates not only that a number of activities are already being undertaken by the United Nations system but also acknowledges the critical role that the multilateral system is playing in our Organization's support for the negotiations taking place under the Framework Convention. Furthermore, Malta believes that one of the strongest messages emanating from the report is the response to the valid pronouncement by the Secretary-General last November that we must also look at our own house and the concept of delivering as one, which perhaps is crucial for the United Nations system to respond in a unified manner to this critical challenge of climate change.

We also note from the written submissions from members of the System Chief Executives Board for Coordination that the United Nations should and does have the collective strength to bring to bear on climate change and to contribute in responding it. Malta welcomes the Board's first-stage effort in defining key areas of action and an effective coordination structure for the United Nations system. My delegation feels that the Board could go even further by evaluating the effectiveness and the financial resources allocated by the United Nations system, as well as the contribution of multilateral environmental agreements in addressing climate change.

The outcome of the Bali Conference last December has generated a sense of urgency and ownership. It is now up to all Member States to translate the eloquent statements of world leaders into meaningful and concrete actions, so as to respond in a sustained and effective manner to the negative impacts of climate change as confirmed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the important scientific findings in the Panel's fourth assessment report, of 2007. The Bali Action Plan gives us hope that the entire international community will engage in an energetic and ambitious response to climate change — comprising actions on adaptation, mitigation, technology and financing and taking into account that the first commitments under the Kyoto Protocol will end in 2012. In that context, Malta is honoured and proud that Mr. Michael Zammit Cutajar, its ambassador for climate change, was chosen as Vice-Chair, and later as Chair, of those delicate and important negotiations on the successor instrument to the Kyoto Protocol.

In meeting that challenge, all Members of the United Nations have agreed to work in partnership and to contribute through common but differentiated responsibilities and their respective capabilities. Like many small island States vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change, Malta is conscious of the enormity of the challenges that lie ahead. Small island States like Malta are at the mercy of changing climatic conditions, which are already affecting their daily lives. The economic and social development of those States is under constant threat. Making adaptation a priority and recognizing the importance of effective global mitigation efforts — framed by a long-term reduction goal of achieving emissions levels of 50 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050 and backed by technological development and diffusion — are, to say the least, the primordial elements of our aspirations.

In its own limited way, Malta has committed itself to working within the European Union, as well as outside it, to take measures to adapt to and mitigate the negative effects of climate change. As a member of the European Union, Malta has endorsed the Union's commitment to reduce greenhouse gases by at least 20 per cent by 2020 relative to 1990.

In practical terms, Malta has taken initiatives to highlight the urgency of climate change issues which complement the work of international institutions. Just last week, the Diplo Foundation, a joint venture between Malta and Switzerland, organized in Malta the very first international conference to address climate change diplomacy. The conference recognized that, although climate change is a global issue by necessity, it is not only States that must take a leading role in addressing such issues but also such actors as civil society, the business community and academia. Focusing largely on capacity-building and discussing both traditional and innovative approaches used in climate change diplomacy, the conference addressed the training and other needs of small States and other actors that, due to limited financial or human resources, cannot participate fully in climate change diplomacy.

Another initiative being launched by Malta this coming July is a summer school on climate-change law and policy at the University of Malta. The main objective will be to examine interrelated factors that influence climate change law and policy, as well as various sectors that will be highly affected by any mitigation and adaptation measures adopted. The summer school will also serve to highlight and discuss legal and policy issues that are still being developed or which until now have remained unaddressed. Mr. Michael Frendo, Malta's Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Professor Juanito Camilleri, Rector of the University of Malta, will jointly address a letter of invitation to all Member States to participate in the summer school initiative.

Yesterday, in the final communiqué adopted at the conclusion of their ministerial meeting held in Malta, the ministers for foreign affairs of the member States of the European Union and of the League of Arab States, among other things, affirmed their concerns at the consequences of climate change and considered that the European Union and the League of Arab States had an obligation to their peoples to combat global warming. In that spirit, they agreed to intensify collaboration to tackle this matter in a manner conducive to greater environmental, social and economic development in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. Ministers agreed on strengthening cooperation and dialogue on climate change, including clean and renewable energy, while promoting sustainable development within existing frameworks.

Malta also looks forward to working with other Member States to consider how best the United Nations system, in collaboration with the private sector and civil society, can collectively address climate change, which is the flagship issue of the current session of the General Assembly. The organization of these two days of deliberations continues to give credence to the will of the overwhelming majority of States to respond urgently to climate change and to support the ongoing process of negotiations.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, let me just say that I have been informed by my colleagues at the Secretariat that we have 64 more speakers. Once again, I implore members to adhere to the five-minute rule, if at all possible.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vanu Gopala Menon, Permanent Representative of Singapore.

Mr. Menon (Singapore): Climate change is the global environmental challenge of our time. As a small island, Singapore is vulnerable to the effects of climate change. We are taking immediate steps to address that challenge, but climate change is a global issue that requires solutions and action at the global level. The world's collective response will determine how well we address it.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is a key United Nations platform for discussing climate change. The Kyoto Protocol was an important attempt by the world to start addressing the problem. But looking ahead, we must work out a practical and effective post-2012 framework. Such a framework should contain the following elements.

First, it must put substance into the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The reality is that developed countries are responsible for the bulk of current and historical greenhouse gas emissions. So, clearly, they have an obligation to take the lead in reducing emissions. They also have to help developing countries address the problem through technology transfer or financial incentives. On the other hand, developing countries need to make effective use of the help they receive and take specific actions appropriate to their situations. The emerging economies are growing rapidly and will be among the largest emitters. Their participation is vital to any effective global solution to climate change.

Secondly, the post-2012 framework should take into account differences in national circumstances and specific constraints that countries may face. Countries vary in size, population and stage of development. Some are endowed with abundant renewable energy resources. Others have no alternatives to fossil fuels. Moreover, due to the international division of labour, countries that serve as manufacturing bases and transportation hubs that supply bunkers for ships and fuel for aeroplanes are naturally larger carbon-emitters than those that supply more services. It would be counterproductive to penalize such countries, as these activities would simply move to other countries that might produce them less efficiently. In short, the post-2012 framework cannot adopt a one-size-fits-all approach.

Thirdly, the framework should take into account the need for continued development and economic growth. Many Governments, especially those in developing countries, are faced with immediate priorities like improving living standards. They need economic growth, resources and energy, in particular fossil fuels, to achieve these goals. It will be difficult for them to accept a framework that impedes their development. But that does not mean that addressing climate change and economic growth are mutually exclusive.

There are already pragmatic and cost-effective ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These steps can be taken immediately. Let me highlight three broad areas.

First, we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing energy efficiency. This area involves using technology to improve energy efficiency and reduce wastage. Energy should also be properly priced so as to avoid subsidizing the overconsumption of fossil fuels. These measures would allow countries to continue their economic growth in a more sustainable manner. Promoting energy efficiency can also drive the development of exportable energy efficient technologies. Singapore has launched a national energy efficiency plan, which we call "E^2 Singapore". This plan is aimed at improving energy efficiency in our main energy-using sectors, namely power generation, industry and transport and in buildings and households. Not only does energy efficiency lower our carbon emissions, it also improves Singapore's cost competitiveness and reduces our energy imports.

Secondly, we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by using cleaner energy sources. The world needs to invest in climate change research and clean energy technologies to make low-carbon energy sources technically and economically viable. We have to try to embed such technologies into our everyday life. Singapore has already moved towards generating most of its power from natural gas, which is less carbon-intensive than fuel oil and coal. We are also committed to the global research effort. We have allocated some $110 million for research into solar and fuel cell technologies. We are also partnering with China to build an eco-city in Tianjin. This project will provide a test bed for environmentally sustainable and economically viable approaches for urban development. If successful, it could be replicated in other cities.

Thirdly, we need to protect the world's carbon sinks. Deforestation accounts for some 20 per cent of carbon emissions. Slash-and-burn practices and the large-scale burning of peatlands release massive amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. We must stop these practices. Our forest reserves must be better managed and protected. That requires the support of the international community, as well as responsible policies and effective enforcement by the countries that have forests. Singapore supports the initiative on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, which emerged from the recent Bali summit. We also support regional initiatives like the Heart of Borneo project, which covers 220,000 square kilometres of forests in Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia. We have also worked bilaterally with Indonesia to tackle peatland fires and develop sustainable land-clearing practices.

Debates at the United Nations can serve as a forum for us to share ideas on how we are dealing with the challenge of climate change at our national levels. But we must not lose sight of the bigger picture. We need to agree on a collective response at the global level if we are to overcome this challenge. Each country must contribute its fair share towards a realistic and workable global solution.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Permanent Representative of Thailand.

Mr. Pramudwinai (Thailand): I join previous speakers in thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this debate. Thailand welcomes the role played by the United Nations during the past year. The Organization has played a significant part in stirring up much greater awareness among members of the international community of these important global issues. We strongly believe that the United Nations should continue to strengthen its role in engaging and promoting climate change discussions among national leaders. It is key in advancing progress in climate change negotiations and stimulating actions among Member States.

As climate change today is linked to practically all dimensions of human life, one linkage that is particularly vital seen from the perspective of developing countries is that between climate change and development. The question before us is how the United Nations can mobilize global efforts to support developing countries, through capacity-building, in balancing the three pillars of sustainable development without sacrificing any of them. To this end, we have only to base our further deliberations and concrete actions on the Bali Road Map, with the Cartagena decisions and the Bali Strategic Plan at its core.

While mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer and financial mechanisms and the study of the effects of deforestation are the main areas of concern in the Bali Road Map, the question is how to optimize the mitigation effects. What role can the United Nations play to nudge developed countries to play their part in greenhouse gas mitigation?

Adaptation efforts are of critical importance and could be generated from various angles. South-South cooperation can therefore play a role, but only as a complement to North-South obligations. The two platforms can conveniently merge into a triangular cooperation agreement that fulfils the spirit of global partnership for development.

Technology transfer and financial support are clearly the most critical factors for developing countries in their fight against climate change. We need a breakthrough in financing for development and intellectual property rights regimes that will make climate-friendly technology and products affordable.

Thailand believes that the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies can contribute greatly to enhancing the feasibility of climate change technology transfer and resource mobilization among parties by helping to resolve conflicting issues in those two areas. Simplifying and operationalizing the Adaptation Fund, together with other innovative mechanisms, should be among priorities of the activities of the United Nations.

The private sector will also have a very crucial role to play. We note with appreciation the work of the United Nations Global Compact in this regard. However, public-private partnership, as suggested in the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/644), is only a part of global partnership, not its main mechanism. Any arrangements that do not include global corporate entities or are without a strong and active political role for Governments will not be sufficient and will fail to address problems at the global scale.

Having said that, and with a full appreciation of the limitations facing the United Nations, I reaffirm my country's readiness and strong commitment to engage actively in this endeavour. I offer our services in this collective fight for a better and greener future.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Giadalla Ettalhi, Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for all his efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in focusing on one of the most urgent matters before us: climate change.

I would also like to stress my country's support for the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States, the Group of African States and the Group of 77 and China.

We welcome the momentum that has been given to this matter, which has created a shared recognition of the success of last December's Bali Conference, at which the Bali Road Map was adopted. The ensuing negotiations will begin in March and should conclude in 2009 with a new agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

We all understand the need for genuine political will and mutual trust among all parties, and we know that we need to address the dangers of climate change through concerted and coordinated international efforts based on the principle agreed upon at the 1992 Rio Summit, that is, that all countries bear common but differentiated responsibilities. We also need to bear in mind that a commitment by developed countries to reduce the levels of their greenhouse gas emissions is the basis of any real progress in mitigating the effects of climate change.

Here, we recall the principles that must be respected when working together to address climate change. These include the principle that no energy source should be favoured at the expense of another. The report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change underlines the difficulty of adopting a single strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The sole focus on fossil fuels as the principal cause of greenhouse gas emissions and the failure to point an accusatory finger to other sources of greenhouse gas emissions and their attendant economic and environmental dangers is thus not logical or realistic.

We are all aware of the scope of the contribution that new, environmentally sound, renewable and economically viable energy sources can make in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We need to call on the developed countries and financial institutions to adopt policies expanding the use of such energy sources, especially in developing countries whose technical capabilities are limited. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation should be pursued, as they allow for training opportunities and access to advanced technologies.

Because of the danger of climate change and its negative effects, especially for developing countries, which are the least able to adapt, developed, industrialized countries, more than ever, must abide by their commitments to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals and must accept their historical responsibility for the emissions which result in global warming.

It is important for African countries facing drought to receive support for their short-term and long-term plans and programmes so that they can implement basic measures, particularly in agricultural development, since agriculture is the main source of food for their peoples. This requires the strengthening of integrated water resource management in order to address shortages, including the introduction of appropriate irrigation systems and the empowerment of Africa's peoples with the know-how to obtain and cultivate seeds for drought-resistant crops.

The international community must intensify its efforts in the field of scientific research and its capacity to monitor and provide early warning of the dangers of climate change. It must also provide international technological cooperation between developed and developing countries, giving the latter access to advanced adaptation technologies to implement climate change mitigation policies.

Non-governmental organizations, civil society and the media can also contribute to making societies aware of the dangers of climate change and of the difference that changes in behaviour and patterns of consumption can make. They can also ensure that these are consistent with the requirements of adaptation strategies.

Libya is eager to contribute to a comprehensive convention, based on justice and equity, as a follow-up to the Kyoto Protocol. We have held an initial seminar on the strengthening of team action on the national level, including monitoring reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. International experts from the United Nations Environment Programme are helping to train members of the team in the preparation of specific databases. We are also devoting attention to the requirements for Libya's second national communication in accordance with our obligations under the Kyoto Protocol.

I would like to reaffirm that socio-economic problems arising in one country as a result of climate change cannot fail to affect the economic and social stability of other countries. It is therefore incumbent on us all to shoulder our moral responsibility through collective action to confront climate change in order to spare future generations the natural disasters which could threaten their lives, security and future.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to pay tribute to the President of the General Assembly for his personal interest in the issue of climate change and for making it one of this year's top priorities. We appreciate his awareness of the importance of this issue and its grave consequences for our planet. We share this interest and concern. According to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change is an undeniable fact that requires immediate mitigation action to avert a catastrophe.

This meeting is a natural extension of the major debate held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007. The Bali Conference resulted in the adoption of an Action Plan and a Road Map that pave the way for future negotiations. That outcome reflects the increase in United Nations action to combat the adverse effects of climate change. Clearly, such action must be undertaken in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, the fundamental mechanisms for addressing the phenomenon.

Qatar attaches due importance to the issue of climate change. We are deeply involved in developing clean fuel. In October, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani established a climate change commission within the Supreme Council of the Environment and Natural Resources in order to monitor the implementation of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, thereby ensuring that all governmental and non-governmental bodies in Qatar honour our commitment. Moreover, we have formulated national policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Qatar is a member of the Adaptation Fund Board created at the Bali Conference in December and has contributed $150 million to the energy, environment and climate change research fund announced at the recent meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries in Riyadh. All of those measures reflect Qatar's firm resolve to preserve the environment on the basis of its profound conviction of the importance of effective international efforts to combat climate change.

The conclusions reached by the IPCC concerning the impact of climate change on sustainable development confirm that, although no country will be spared the effects of climate change, the developing countries are the most seriously affected, given their limited resources and capacity to adapt. Climate change should therefore be addressed in an integrated perspective and in the context of sustainable development, as noted at the 1992 Rio Conference. The development and transfer of modern technology should be a fundamental pillar of global efforts to combat climate change.

The campaign against climate change must be based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility and take into account the fact that the developing countries will be the most affected by the adverse effects of climate change. Furthermore, the developing countries, including the oil-exporting countries, will be most seriously harmed by the measures taken to stem climate change. The developed countries, understanding that they are principally responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, must assume their responsibilities in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, as we noted earlier.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Dan Gillerman, Permanent Representative of Israel.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): At the outset, allow me to congratulate President Kerim on his able stewardship of this Assembly and to thank him for convening this important thematic debate entitled "Addressing Climate Change: The United Nations and the World at Work".

My delegation wishes to thank President Kerim for organizing the interesting and important panels held on Monday. We heard a great deal about the complexity of issues and the importance of uniting the efforts of the United Nations system to address climate change with the goal of receiving clear guidance and a mandate from this Assembly and its member States. We must create a common agenda and a common vision, and the United Nations is the appropriate forum for coordinating those efforts. Hence, my delegation welcomes the call for an inclusive and coherent approach to enable the United Nations system to work together through partnership.

The global resolve to address climate change, as seen in the past few months, has led us to the Bali Road Map and Action Plan. Yet Bali provided only a framework. It remains up to the Member States to reach an agreement by the end of 2009. Hence, all parties, developed and developing nations alike, must do their part. The Bali process must also develop as a basis for action to effectively adapt to the inevitable consequences of climate change and to successfully mitigate its causes. In that respect, financial and technological tools that provide essential catalysts are crucial.

Israel also wishes to underscore that the resource and capacity gaps among States means that we must agree on a differentiated timetable for Member States to adjust their national policies and implement their commitments, though all States should take part and mitigate. Similarly, we should welcome and support those who seek to expedite their timetables and implementation goals.

Partnership is the key ingredient to finding a common way forward on climate change. Israel is interested in learning from the international community and is also poised to share, where relevant, its own experience, technologies, best practices and know-how. We are committed to advancing cooperation through various avenues, particularly through the United Nations system, building on national strategies and enhancing international cooperation.

As a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 1996 and the Kyoto Protocol since 2004, Israel has pledged its commitment to work on all fronts to combat climate change. The flexibility mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol have proven effective for providing incentives for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and Israel's national policies are tailored to attract projects in sustainable fields.

As the discussions on Monday reiterated the linkage between climate change and sustainable development, and in particular forestation, I wish to highlight an impressive example of afforestation activities in Israel: the Yatir forest, located on the edge of the Negev desert, which comprises approximately half of Israel's land area. Planting began 40 years ago, and it is now the largest forest in the country. It has completely changed the arid landscape, as research shows that the desert forest absorbs carbon dioxide just as efficiently as forests in wet areas. That is an example of the implementation of a national dimension we heard about in the context of cities and United Nations organizations two days ago.

Israel also recently participated in the International Conference to Combat Desertification in Beijing, which was co-sponsored by the Chinese Government and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Israel has also hosted a number of workshops on combating desertification with that Department and UNFCCC, particularly for developing African nations. Those forums give Israel the opportunity to share some of the highly resourceful and developed tools for turning the desert into productive and habitable land.

In addition to mitigation efforts, Israel is already adapting to the existing effects of climate change. Climate change in our region has affected the problem of water deficiency.

Hence, Israeli experts are pioneering water management and cutting-edge technologies in drip irrigation, recycling and purifying wastewater, water desalination and desert agriculture. These technologies, particularly in the area of combating desertification, are shared with like-minded and interested partners through the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs Centre for International Cooperation (MASHAV), with an emphasis on technology transfer, capacity-building and training.

Similarly, Israel serves as a Vice-Chair in the Bureau of the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. During the current Assembly session, Israel introduced a draft resolution on agricultural technology for development, adopted as resolution 62/190, which calls on Member States to commit themselves to supporting the use of local know-how and technology and to promote agricultural research, productivity and food security in poor rural areas.

Looking towards the future, Israel seeks to increase partnerships within the United Nations system and other international bodies on issues such as water, agriculture, land management and afforestation. Last year, Israel signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Environment Programme. To date, more than 30 projects have been submitted to our designated national authority for approval, and seven have been registered by the Clean Development Mechanism Executive Board. We strongly support ensuring the stability and continuity of the Mechanism, through integration into the provisions of a post-Kyoto agreement. Lastly, our growing relationship and cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs helps to lay the foundation for partnerships and international, regional, national and local activities.

Monday's sessions also reinforced for us the importance and urgency of translating words into action. With the recognition that every little bit counts, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently unveiled a new initiative to upgrade all its diplomatic vehicles in North America to hybrid cars, as just one of the many examples across the spectrum and sectors where Israel is working to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change. I drive a hybrid. I enjoy it, and I recommend it to everyone here.

In conclusion, allow me to illustrate how a willingness to form partnerships has shown that the challenge of climate change can be transformed into an opportunity for cooperation, even amidst political differences. In 1994, in a region where water sources are already scarce, Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty containing a water sharing provision, reputed to be one of the most creative water treaties on record. Cooperation between Israel and its neighbours has also produced agreements such as the Upper Gulf of Aqaba Oil Spill Contingency Project, the Desertification Initiative and an Environmental Code of Conduct for the Middle East.

Civil society and academic institutions have long pioneered efforts in the environmental field, and they are supported by a vocal and dedicated Israeli non-governmental organization community. The Israeli private sector has also contributed to partnership and the exchange of ideas on environmental and technological issues, and those efforts will be expanded with the launching of the United Nations Global Compact in Israel later this year. The Israeli Compact has strong participation from the environmental players.

Israel, for its part, supports these initiatives and our deliberations, and it looks forward to seeing the cultivation of new and enriching partnerships to boost the achievement of our shared objectives. We stand ready to share our expertise and experience with our neighbours and other interested States in order to assure a better, safer and cleaner region — and world — for all our children and grandchildren.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Guerra Salgueiro, Permanent Representative of Portugal.

Mr. Salgueiro (Portugal): I would like first to align myself with the statement made yesterday morning by the Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

Scientists leading research into climate change have, over the years, painstakingly set out a stark vision of how the world will change if humanity fails to tackle surging greenhouse gas emissions. The scientific case for action was authoritatively and unambiguously confirmed again by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its Fourth Assessment Report, underscoring the scale of the challenge confronting humankind and the urgency of addressing it at all levels.

Climate change is increasingly becoming a contributing factor to environmental, economic and security threats. A warming world would threaten billions of people with thirst and malnutrition, endanger more than half of wildlife species with extinction and hasten the melting of the ice caps and glaciers, which could raise global sea levels by more than 22 feet, unleashing catastrophic and irremediable effects and imperilling human life on Earth.

Unfortunately, some of these changes are already under way, but there is still a window for action, albeit a narrow one, to prevent some of the worst effects of an accelerated degree of disruption of the world's climate.

As the IPCC tells us, mitigation is technically feasible and economically affordable if we act with resolve now. In fact, it is widely recognized that early action will reduce the severity and frequency of the impacts of climate change, avoiding potentially massive costs to our societies.

Climate change cannot be faced merely as an environmental issue. The ramifications of this challenge are cross-cutting in nature and will have deep implications for all three pillars of sustainable development, impacting economic growth and jeopardizing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It is certain that the most vulnerable countries — and, in particular, the most exposed groups in those countries, namely, women and children — will be the hardest hit.

That is why the international community needs to address the challenges of development and climate change in a more coherent and focused manner.

According to the IPCC, future vulnerability depends not only on climate change but also on the type of development that is pursued. In this regard, adaptation measures can be successful only if implemented in the context of national and international sustainable development plans. Moreover, adaptation to climate change should be mainstreamed within development assistance programmes.

Recognizing the urgency of tackling this challenge, we, Portugal, together with our European Union partners, have shown our determination to continue playing an active role in the fight against the negative effects of climate change by strengthening our own commitments. It is clear, however, that climate change must be acknowledged as a real global threat and that urgent action must be taken by the international community as a whole.

It has to be acknowledged that 2007 was an extraordinary year in terms of raising the political profile of climate change as a crucial issue and as a common concern of humankind. Indeed, the unprecedented involvement of key political players and institutions at all levels and in several forums not only permitted a thorough discussion of many of the issues underpinning the climate change challenge, but also allowed for the recognition of the central role of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as the appropriate multilateral forum for reaching a global and comprehensive climate agreement.

The informal thematic debate at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, entitled "Climate change as a global challenge", as well as the high-level event on climate change convened by the Secretary-General last 24 September, provided judicious and momentous contributions in this regard, galvanizing political attention to climate change-related problems and calling for breakthrough action from all parties at last December's Bali Conference.

Bali did provide such a breakthrough, and parties agreed to engage in a two-year negotiating process to deliver a global and comprehensive climate agreement. That process will encompass both mitigation and enhanced action on adaptation, while also considering the supporting role of technology and financial resources and investment in action on adaptation and mitigation.

In this joint endeavour, all countries have the responsibility to act according to their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

To keep up the momentum throughout the year and to contribute to solving this common problem, we need to further translate our words into solid action by establishing tangible and ambitious goals. The United Nations system must cultivate this global political thrust and enhance the areas where its contribution can better serve the objectives to be attained through common commitment and decisive partnerships.

In this regard, the report of the Secretary-General on the overview of the United Nations activities in relation to climate change (A/62/644) is a very useful starting point upon which the wider membership can judiciously build with a view to advancing the climate change agenda through the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Poznań, Poland — COP 14 — at the end of this year and towards the Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen — COP 15 — in 2009.

There is a tremendous challenge ahead of us, but history is made of vision, courage and big steps forward. We must all contribute and be prepared for the transition to a low-carbon economy, conscious that the next steps will require unprecedented international cooperation on a path that we must truly walk together, with the United Nations system at the centre of that endeavour.

The international community has now two years of very intensive negotiation ahead and cannot but meet the expectations of public opinion and respond in an adequate way to the clear scientific findings.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Farukh Amil, representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): Pakistan wishes to associate itself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda at the 80th meeting on behalf of G-77 and China. We would like to make the following additional comments.

The Bali Road Map, in particular the Bali Action Plan — the outcome of the Bali conference on climate change — is the most recent manifestation of the resolve of the international community to address climate change through a concerted global action based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Most importantly, we believe the Bali Action Plan promotes an integrated and coordinated approach to address climate change in a manner that enhances and ensures the sustainable development and sustained economic growth of the developing countries.

Pakistan, with the fifth largest population in the world, is responsible for only 0.4 per cent of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions and is 135th on the list of global greenhouse gas emitters. Despite such a low contribution of emissions, climate change is causing irrevocable damage to Pakistan with a tremendous social, environmental and economic impact, including on our country's forest resources and natural ecosystems. Even the glaciers in the Himalayas are receding faster than in any other part of the world. It is feared that many of these glaciers may disappear by 2035, or perhaps sooner if the earth keeps warming at the current rate. That will have a serious and adverse impact on our agricultural productivity as well as on our forest resources and natural ecosystems.

In fact, in a series of recent research studies and reports, South Asia is viewed as a region severely affected by climate change. One such study maintains that South Asia and southern Africa will be hit first and hardest by climate change. The reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) also point out increased precipitation intensity, rainfall variability, risk of floods, land degradation and water stress, among others, as factors that will adversely affect millions in South Asia.

Pakistan remains deeply committed to the global efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change and has taken the following measures for the improvement and protection of the environment.

A Prime Minister's Committee on Climate Change has been constituted as a policy and review forum. A Global Change Impact Studies Centre has been established for undertaking research on climate change and suggesting appropriate adaptation measures. A Clean Development Mechanism Cell has been established under the Climate Change Wing of the Ministry of Environment to facilitate approval of Clean Development Mechanism projects in the country. Despite resource constraints, the Government is launching a mega forestry project worth $240 million for carbon sequestration, without financial assistance from international donors. Other interventions that also contribute to climate change adaptation include our Mountain Areas Conservancy Programme, the Pakistan Wetlands Programme and the Sustainable Land Management Project.

Clearly, the challenge of climate change is too big for any one country to tackle single-handedly. The United Nations undoubtedly has a central role to play in this regard, particularly by advancing the global development agenda, including a concerted global action to meet the challenge of climate change. The United Nations made an important contribution by building up the political momentum for the successful conclusion of the Bali Conference under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol — the multilateral framework for cooperative actions to address climate change. It should play a similar catalytic role to address all three pillars of sustainable development.

One important area where United Nations can and must make an important contribution, as part of an integrated approach to sustainable development, is the implementation of the commitments already made to address the challenge of climate change, including in the four areas of mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance.

The United Nations, through the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, can devise new mechanisms or use the existing ones to effectively monitor the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and those commitments made under UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol.

Agencies of the United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Food and Agricultural Organization, may, upon request by the developing countries, assist them in developing national action plans and strategies to deal with climate change, particularly with adaptation and in identifying their capacity-building, technology and financing needs, including the capacity to avail themselves of funding opportunities offered by the Clean Development Mechanism and other available mechanisms.

The United Nations, particularly the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and UNCTAD can also be helpful in providing information and data to bolster the capacity of the developing countries to meaningfully engage in the complex and serious climate change negotiations, particularly under the Bali Action Plan.

The report of the Secretary-General has made a number of interesting suggestions to enhance the capacity of the United Nations system to assist countries in meeting the climate change challenge. However, it is not clear where the resources needed to undertake those steps will come from. We must ensure that the existing resources are not diverted and that adequate provision for additional resources is made in order to allow the United Nations system agencies to take on the climate change responsibilities mandated by the intergovernmental decisions.

The United Nations system can also be particularly helpful through UNCTAD, UNDP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in developing a climate change vulnerability index or providing more structured information on the vulnerabilities of various countries and regions due to climate change to allow for more effective and equitable allocation of resources.

UNCTAD and other relevant United Nations agencies should also carry out a technology needs assessment of the developing countries, in close collaboration with the subsidiary bodies of the UNFCCC to promote a global technology response to climate change.

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs should also undertake a comprehensive needs assessment for financing, in close collaboration with international financial institutions and UNDP, to meet the challenges of adaptation, mitigation and technology access and transfer. We believe that the UNDP Human Development Report is an important first step in that regard.

Pakistan also fully recognizes and greatly appreciates the important role that public-private partnerships can play in preparing an effective response by which to address the challenge of climate change at the global as well as the national level. However, given the magnitude of the challenge involved, the role of the public sector remains paramount. Public-private partnerships, we believe, can play an important role in that regard.

Pakistan will continue to play its rightful role as a concerned and active member of the international community in addressing the challenge that we collectively face.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Carsten Staur, Permanent Representative of Denmark.

Mr. Staur (Denmark): I very much welcome this opportunity to address the Assembly and shall, at the very outset, align myself with the statement made at the 80th meeting by the representative of Slovenia, which currently holds the Presidency of the European Union.

Climate change is a tremendous challenge to the international community, to all Member States and to every one of us as individuals. The Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), issued last fall, was an important element in raising international awareness prior to the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 13), held in Bali. The report showed that climate change is occurring more rapidly than previously assumed. The need for action has thus become even more imperative.

The successful outcome of the Bali Conference marks an important turn in our common efforts to address climate change. In Bali, we not only agreed that there is a global need to address climate change; we also agreed on the need for targets aimed at reducing global carbon emissions in response to scientifically proven needs. And we agreed on a coherent framework for negotiations including all countries and based on two main tracks: adaptation and mitigation, supported by efforts in the areas of technology, financing and capacity-building. Finally, we managed to agree on an accelerated negotiation process for 2008 leading to COP 14, to be held in Poznań, Poland, as an important benchmark in the negotiating process for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It is vital that a good platform be agreed upon in Poznań with a view to continued negotiations in the course of 2009.

The United Nations plays the pivotal role by providing the framework for negotiations on a new climate agreement through the UNFCCC. The United Nations system, however, also has an essential role to play through broader supportive action. Climate change is a complex development issue. Addressing climate change is a prerequisite for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, Denmark very much welcomes the report of the Secretary-General and of the Chief Executives Board (A/62/644) prepared for this meeting. We encourage the Secretary-General and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to continue to play a leading role in ensuring a coordinated and effective United Nations response to the challenges of climate change.

Let me briefly outline five strategic objectives that, in our view, warrant special priority at this juncture.

First of all, the United Nations system should seize the challenge of climate change as an opportunity to demonstrate that the United Nations system is not only committed but also able to deliver as one. The United Nations must not only act coherently as a system and fully align itself with national priorities in partner countries; it must also ensure the coordination of operational activities in the areas of adaptation to and mitigation of climate change with other global actors, such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, so that the division of labour among the various actors can be clearly delineated.

Secondly, the United Nations should continue to facilitate the flow of the knowledge and data necessary for sound decision-making on climate change.

Thirdly, the United Nations should promote the integration of climate change considerations into policy formulation and decision-making. At the country level, as we are all aware, that requires the integration of those issues into national development strategies.

Fourthly, the United Nations — and not least the United Nations Development Programme, in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme — has an essential role to play in many countries in capacity-building at the country level. That means helping to build capacity for international negotiation processes and for domestic policy-making and policy implementation with regard to climate change.

Finally, the United Nations should take the lead in providing a conceptual framework for the integration of climate change concerns into the broader development agenda, including in the context of the upcoming dialogue on financing for development.

In all those areas, Denmark is actively engaged in strengthening the role of the United Nations.

In conclusion, I just want to stress that the momentum for a new comprehensive international climate agreement is growing ever stronger. As the host of COP 15, to be held in 2009, and as a member of the COP troika, Denmark is strongly committed to working closely with all other Member States with a view to reaching an ambitious agreement that responds adequately to the enormous global challenges arising from climate change. The next two years will require concerted efforts by all parties and stakeholders so that an agreement can be reached in Copenhagen in December 2009. We stand ready to do our part.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Camillo Gonsalves, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines fully associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Barbados on behalf of the Caribbean Community and by the representative of Grenada on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States at the 81st meeting, and the statement by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the 80th meeting.

The adoption of the Bali Road Map two months ago is a welcome, if modest, step in our continued struggle for global climate security. However, the true worth of the Road Map will not be measured by self-congratulatory statements this week, but by the work of Member States and by our genuine commitment to the Bali Action Plan in the immediate future. The United Nations process has adequately framed the issues and charted the way forward. Now it is time for the world to work towards concrete implementation of both the spirit and the letter of the Road Map.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines accepts the scientific evidence that demonstrates a causal relationship between climate change and the levels of greenhouse gas emissions, emanating primarily from developed countries. Thus, we recognize that it is crucially important for developed countries to make radical cuts in their emissions. We have every confidence that, as responsible global citizens, they will work in good faith towards meaningful reductions in the coming years.

But the importance of future emissions reductions cannot overshadow the fact that, for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and many other countries, climate change is not an esoteric theoretical concept looming on a distant hypothetical horizon; it is a stark reality and a gathering threat. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, citizens are being displaced by increasingly intense storms and tidal surges today. Residents are slowly losing their coastal property to rising and encroaching seas today. Our Government is investing heavily in coastal fortifications today. Our undersea environment is suffering from reef death and coral bleaching today. And our farming, fishing and tourism sectors are being adversely affected today. The immediacy of those issues means that we cannot wait for 2012 and beyond for incremental relief from the lifestyle excesses of others. We need to address those problems today.

In that regard, the twin issues of adaptation and financing are of urgent importance to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Adaptation financing, in particular, cannot be simply an awkward appendage of mitigation efforts. It is insufficient to merely pay lip service to the importance of adaptation while dooming adaptation initiatives to failure through inadequate funding or support. If climate change is indeed the defining human development challenge of the twenty-first century, as stated in Bali by the President of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, we cannot delude ourselves into thinking that this challenge can be addressed on the cheap. It will quickly become apparent to the international community that the recently launched Adaptation Fund, although welcome, is nonetheless severely undercapitalized and will be unable to cope with even modest adaptation needs unless it is buttressed by substantial voluntary contributions from developed countries.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines therefore sees ample scope for innovative regional approaches to adaptation and opportunities for fresh partnerships in the area of capacity-building. We welcome efforts to deepen South-South cooperation on a broad range of environmental issues, such as the energy-saving light bulb initiative selflessly advanced by Cuba, which has reduced the carbon footprint and electricity bill of almost every residence in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Additionally, it is necessary to fundamentally review the debt obligations of developing countries through the prism of climate change. Many of us are still paying for infrastructural investments that are no longer viable or whose effective lifespan will be severely curtailed by climate change. Many of us will have to borrow more to retrofit previous investments, which were often funded, designed and built by foreign lenders. It is illogical and immoral that we continue to pay developed creditor States for items whose very use is compromised by their actions.

The gravity of the climate change challenge also forces us to abandon long-standing proprietary paradigms of technological exclusivity. The world cannot sacrifice its collective climate security on the altar of private profit or outmoded parochial concepts of intellectual property. If climate change is a global problem, so too must the solutions belong to the entire planet. The developed world and the scientific community must find ways to quickly and freely place emerging green technologies and capabilities into the hands of those who need them most urgently. Measurable, reportable and verifiable cooperation in the fields of technology, capacity-building and financing are not charity. They are shrewd investments against future global catastrophes.

It is crucial that the challenge of climate change be viewed not simply as an environmental issue, but as a cross-cutting development concern. For some States, coping with climate change may not only represent an added expense, but may require a complete readjustment of development priorities. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, for example, has been effectively globalized out of reliance on agriculture as the dominant engine for national growth and development. Now, the threat is that we may be climatized out of a similar reliance on tourism. We are making multi-million dollar investments in leveraging our sunny climate, calm seas, pristine beaches and coral reefs to lure tourists. Climate change threatens to deprive us of those few marketable natural assets.

Further, the profound development implications of climate change must necessarily trigger a fundamental re-examination of the international community's approach to development assistance. Development commitments made in the past — before the impact of climate change was fully understood — must now be reconsidered, and those of us in the developing world must clearly consider the development impact not only of climate change, but also of the measures being employed to address it. For example, the rush to biofuel production will barely dent the developed world's appetite for fossil fuels, but has already made basic foodstuffs noticeably more expensive in many developing States. We cannot allow ourselves to be negatively affected by both climate change and its proposed solutions.

While Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is fully cognizant of the critical importance of steady and efficient procedural progress in coordinating the global effort against climate change, we in the United Nations cannot become so enamoured with the process that we lose sight of the substance of our mission. There is an old joke in the medical profession whose punchline is: "The operation was a success, but the patient nonetheless died". Amidst the shuffle of expert groups, working groups and a proliferation of new abbreviations and acronyms, we must never forget that our patient is the planet Earth, and that the survival of the entire planet is our collective responsibility. We cannot afford to fail.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Baki İlkin, Permanent Representative of Turkey.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): My delegation has fully aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union, yet, I still would like to add my voice to the debate and share some of our views on the vital issue before us.

Especially after the Bali agreement, today's thematic debate provides us with an opportunity to further reflect on the United Nations pivotal role in climate change. It is amply evident that we face an enormous threat posed by climate change. Its effects are already being felt and, if not properly tackled, will worsen over time, as indicated by the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The IPCC report makes it clear that future climate change could critically undermine efforts for sustainable development throughout the world, and especially in North Africa and in the Mediterranean region. In particular, climate change may add to existing problems of desertification, water scarcity and food production, while also introducing new threats to human health, livestock, ecosystems and the national economies of countries. Turkey itself is one of those countries that are highly vulnerable to climate change.

Our location in the eastern Mediterranean basin obliges us to pursue policies in dealing with the infrequency of rainfall, as well as the trend towards decreasing precipitation, scarcity of water and desertification.

The adverse effects of climate change in terms of extreme weather events, temperature increases and sea-level rise are also a grave concern, especially for small island developing States. The devastating impacts of recent disasters that those countries have experienced over the past years have further highlighted the particular significance of the issue. Let me underline once again that Turkey fully shares their concerns and is committed to supporting the global efforts to address their urgent needs in the face of climate change.

While mitigation is one of the major aspects of the fight to limit global temperature increase, adaptation to climate change is equally important and constitutes a demanding agenda for the developing countries. In that regard, the developed countries will have to shoulder a bigger responsibility, but the developing countries will have to play their part, too. Our joint efforts must be commensurate with economic growth and social development. Without investment in capacity-building for adaptation and proper technology transfer, development efforts will be undermined.

It is evident that Turkey's sustainable development will depend on its adaptive capacity to climate change. In recent years, the Turkish Government has made serious efforts to introduce and implement adaptive measures ranging from effective water management and irrigation to national and international afforestation campaigns.

In that regard, Turkey has become a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). However, Turkey's status as an annex I party in the framework of the Convention does not reflect the actual industrialization level of my country. Although Turkey is a country of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, it is neither yet a fully developed industrialized country, nor in the group of countries the economies of which are in transition. As such, we rely mainly on our national resources for adapting to climate change, whereas non-annex I party countries are able to benefit from the relevant mechanisms of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. Thus, one might say that Turkey is still in a sui generis situation vis-à-vis the current international climate change regime. We hope that the post-2012 regime will recategorize countries on the basis of their different development levels, instead of merely listing them as annex and non-annex parties.

Turkey fully supports and actively participates in global efforts, under the guidance of the United Nations, to adapt to the adverse consequences of climate change, while combating desertification as well as implementing policies for mitigation. This year, Turkey will host the seventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Istanbul from 20 to 29 October. We would like to take this opportunity to inform the General Assembly that we are very pleased also to be holding the tenth session of the IPCC in Turkey in 2009. Furthermore, it gives me pleasure to invite all participants to the fifth World Water Forum, to be held in Istanbul in March 2009, which will provide us with the opportunity to share our experiences for better water management that will take into account the concerns for climate change and desertification.

Climate change has become part and parcel of sustainable and social development, as well as of economic prosperity and energy policies. Its cross-cutting nature requires an integrated approach and concerted action across many forums of the United Nations. With its outreach capacity and legitimacy, we believe, the United Nations is best suited and well equipped to rise to the daunting challenge that climate change poses. I am sure that we all have the ability and the political will to further strengthen the United Nations central role in coordinating and leading our response to that threat.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Yukio Takasu, Permanent Representative of Japan.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): All the nations of the world recognize that climate change is the most serious and urgent challenge in human history. In reaching agreement in Bali on the post-2012 framework negotiation process, we have arrived at a common understanding about how to address that vital problem. Japan will make every possible effort to ensure that the Bali Road Map produces the most effective framework by the time of the fifteenth Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, in Copenhagen.

At the recent World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Prime Minister Fukuda presented a proposal called the "Cool Earth Promotion Programme". He expressed his firm determination that Japan will, along with other major emitters, set a quantified national target for greenhouse gas emissions reductions. In order to realize a drastic reduction in such gases worldwide, it is imperative that there be equity in the shouldering of that obligation. Prime Minister Fukuda also announced that Japan will take action in the area of international environmental cooperation by engaging in technology transfer and establishing a financial mechanism.

Japan has succeeded in its pursuit of economic growth and environmental protection by striving to conserve energy. It is willing to share that experience by transferring high-quality environmental technology to other countries. For example, if the level of efficiency in Japan's power plants is achieved in the United States, India and China, the resulting carbon dioxide emissions reductions would amount to 1.3 billion tons, which is the equivalent of Japan's annual total emissions. In that context, Japan proposes to set a global target of 30 per cent improvement of energy efficiency by 2020.

Japan has launched the Cool Earth Partnership to provide assistance amounting to $10 billion over five years to developing countries that are making efforts to reduce emissions and struggling against the severe adverse impact of climate change. Assistance will be provided in the area of mitigation, adaptation and access to clean energy. Special attention will be paid to small island developing countries and least developed countries, which are exposed to such dangers as the submersion of land and desertification as a result of emissions from other countries. Japan also aims to create a new multilateral fund, together with the United States and the United Kingdom, and we invite other donors to participate.

The importance of innovation, such as the development of new technologies and the creation of low-carbon societies, must also be stressed. Technological breakthroughs are critical if greenhouse gas emissions are to be cut in half by 2050. Japan is accelerating the development of technology, such as zero-carbon dioxide emission coal-fired power plants; low-cost, high-efficiency solar power generation technology; and green information technology. Japan will be emphasizing investment in research and development in the fields of the environment and energy, and over the next five years will be investing approximately $30 billion in that effort. We propose to formulate an international framework to accelerate technology development and share the fruits of such efforts.

In order to address climate change, it is essential to raise awareness of eco-lifestyles and mobilize all available resources, not only from the public but also from the private sector. The United Nations Global Compact can be most useful. The private sector has the most important role to play in the development, deployment and transfer of technology. In the effort to achieve a low-carbon society, private investment must be promoted. Japan expects the United Nations system to play an active part in the orchestration of such global efforts, and it appreciates the leadership that the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly have provided in generating the political momentum necessary to advance the international negotiation process.

The fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has made a substantial contribution to that progress by putting an end to the dispute concerning what causes climate change and clarifying in a scientific manner the serious impact climate change is having. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change should play the pivotal role in the negotiation, with support from other United Nations agencies, as reported by the Secretary-General. It is important to promote coherence and coordination among United Nations agencies in order to address the issue in an effective and efficient manner without duplication.

As the 2009 deadline for the negotiations approaches, international debate is likely to intensify. Japan, as President of the G8 this year, will strive to make positive contributions to the negotiation process.

At the same time, as we look to the future, we must recognize that there are things that we can do right now and get to work on them. Most importantly, we should promote eco-lifestyles, known in Japanese as *mottainai* — meaning "not wasteful" — lifestyles. For example, recycling should be encouraged, and our homes and offices maintained in an energy-efficient manner. Japan calls on all actors to bring to bear the wisdom of humankind on that problem so that we may create a low-carbon society and win the battle against climate change.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Sir John Sawers, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): We have been talking this week about how the United Nations can turn awareness of climate change into a coherent programme to support the Bali Action Plan. I take from the debate so far six main conclusions.

My first conclusion is that we are united in our sense of urgency to tackle climate change through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as the multilateral framework for agreeing a post-2012 climate deal. Whatever discussions happen outside that framework, they should support the central effort of the UNFCCC.

My second conclusion is that climate change threatens most of the United Nations objectives. It is a threat to peace and security, and above all to prosperity and development. As Kemal Dervis said, unless we address climate change and poverty reduction together, we will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Sustainable development must be sustainable, but high carbon growth or development strategies that do not take account of an already changing climate are not sustainable and will fail.

My third conclusion is that the United Nations is already doing a lot of good work on climate change. United Nations agencies provide unbiased scientific evidence, monitoring and early warning. They build the capacities of developing countries. They support the development of coherent national plans. They harness the innovative capacity of partnerships and, of course, the UNFCCC secretariat supports the legitimate universal forum for negotiations.

My fourth conclusion is that the United Nations alone does not hold the solution. United Nations agencies need to identify where they fit within a broader international system. That includes the international financial institutions, the private sector, research institutions, the UNFCCC and many other organizations. The United Kingdom believes that the new money needed to help developing countries acquire clean energy and adapt to a changing climate should flow mainly through the development banks and the private sector, but United Nations agencies should have a substantive role in ensuring that funding is used effectively, and do that by concentrating on building capacity in developing country Governments. Working together, the United Nations and the international financial institutions can deliver a coherent package of support.

My fifth conclusion is that agencies are already working in collaboration, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme on poverty and environment; the World Tourism Organization, UNESCO and UNEP on greening tourism; and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and UNEP on energy efficiency. However, such collaboration is the exception and not the norm. There are also many examples of duplication — for example, in the areas of capacity-building, early warning and assessment.

My sixth conclusion is that to maximize the United Nations contribution we need a strategic vision of how the different parts of the United Nations can best contribute to the Bali Action Plan. Information-sharing is not enough. We need real coordination that identifies comparative advantages and sets out a clear division of labour.

It was refreshing on Monday to hear views from within the United Nations system. As Achim Steiner outlined, there is still too much fragmentation, driven by lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of different agencies. And Mats Karlsson pointed out how senior leadership within the United Nations is needed to make the whole more than the sum of its parts.

Fragmentation is the greatest barrier to the United Nations maximizing its impact. The Secretary-General's report of 10 January (A/62/644) illustrates the enormous potential the United Nations has to help tackle climate change. But the lack of a shared strategic vision to realize that potential is striking. We look to the Secretary-General to lead the work needed to deliver this strategic vision. And we look to each agency to honestly assess its strengths and weaknesses, and to focus on how it can best serve the United Nations system and the membership as a whole.

Member States too have responsibilities. We must send clear and consistent messages, particularly through the various governing bodies, on where we think different agencies' comparative advantages lie. And those of us that provide voluntary funding must use it to support coherence, rather than exacerbate fragmentation.

So where do we go from here? The Secretary-General's report suggests some ideas, but these need elaboration. There is promise in the idea of sectoral approaches, with lead United Nations agencies working to an overall strategy under the supervision of the Chief Executives Board (CEB). We think that most of this work can be done under existing mandates. We agree with the Group of 77 that this can be done without prejudice to intergovernmental discussions on system-wide coherence and international environmental governance.

In taking forward the CEB's work, I would suggest the following activities. First, analysis should be done of what the United Nations is already doing to support the implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and on each of the Bali commitments. This should give a good idea of where the strengths, weaknesses, overlaps and gaps are.

Secondly, we should identify the comparative advantage of each United Nations body, based on their existing mandates, skills base, global profile and potential, taking full account of the roles of the rest of the international system.

Thirdly, based on that, we should develop a coherent United Nations climate engagement strategy under the leadership of the Secretary-General that responds to the Bali Action Plan. This approach should provide both an overall strategic vision and some detailed principles for coordinated working.

Fourthly, once we have this, agencies should work up their own strategies in the light of this wider climate engagement strategy, taking a fresh look at what they are doing now. Consultation with their governing bodies may be needed. But areas of duplication should be ironed out, and work should be intensified where an agency has a comparative advantage and priority needs are unmet.

This work will take time, and some interests will lose out along the way. But it is of the utmost urgency and priority if the United Nations is to be relevant to this biggest of global challenges. The United Kingdom stands ready to help in whatever way we can. I have no doubt that the General Assembly will continue to play a role overseeing this work. But we should not hold it up.

I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this timely debate.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Mr. Cho Hyun.

Mr. Cho Hyun (Republic of Korea): I would first like to express my appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for organizing this thematic debate.

I believe that 2007 was a year marked by increased political momentum in addressing the daunting challenge of climate change. The United Nations high-level event on climate change brought the subject to the attention of the international community at the highest level. That contributed decisively to the adoption of the Bali Road Map at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held in December. We recognize Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's constructive role in the establishment of the Bali Road Map.

The Korean Government appreciates the fact that the Bali Road Map laid the foundation for a global partnership to establish a post-2012 framework that can efficiently and effectively address the problem. We also welcome the launch of the comprehensive post-2012 negotiations, where both developed and developing countries will participate in the light of each country's economic and social circumstances. We hope that the international community will reach a successful conclusion to these negotiations within the allotted time.

We believe that the United Nations should play a pivotal role in seeking solutions to the challenges of climate change. We also believe that the implementation of the Bali Action Plan is important. Establishing strong partnerships among stakeholders, including central and local governments as well as industrial and civil society, is also crucial. In addition, we believe that partnerships between developed and developing countries will encourage the meaningful participation of developing countries in addressing climate change through adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and financing. We expect that the United Nations, particularly the UNFCCC, will continue to play a creative role in developing common ground for a post-2012 framework in the course of the 2008-2009 negotiations.

Therefore, we believe that each United Nations agency should first and foremost place climate change at the top of its agenda and promote the mainstreaming of so-called green activities. It is also imperative that United Nations agencies coordinate among themselves regarding such climate change activities in order to achieve the most effective results.

In this light, the Korean Government supports the efforts of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). We expect that the CEB will continue to find a productive way to coordinate United Nations entities in this field; the efforts of United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes will thereby demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency by avoiding duplication and fragmentation.

Alongside these United Nations efforts, we believe that each country must also coordinate efforts by its ministries and departments. Such efforts by national ministries and departments should correspond to and be coordinated with those of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in order to aim for the best possible results.

For our part, the Korean Government launched its fourth national action plan on climate change last December. Its main agenda included strengthening the capacity-building skills of local governments, industries and civil society in confronting climate change.

Korea will also continue to engage in the international process to address climate change, including supporting the UNFCCC and other initiatives. We are ready to contribute constructively to these efforts and to integrate an environmental perspective into our official development assistance policies and projects. In addition, in planning for Expo 2012 in Yeosu, my Government intends to encourage international efforts for sustainable development that take into account protecting marine and coastal ecosystems against climate change.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea will continue to commit itself to engaging in collective international efforts against climate change.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Robert Guba Aisi, Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): Through you, Sir, let me congratulate the President on organizing this thematic debate. I also take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his committed leadership in our efforts to address climate change. We also align ourselves with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Alliance of Small Island States, and the Pacific small islands developing States by the ambassadors of Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada and Tonga respectively.

For Papua New Guinea and, I suspect, many other countries, the time for mind-numbing debate has passed. The time for leadership is here. We cannot idly watch our island communities slip silently under the waves of sea-level rise, our villages torn apart by cyclones of increasing fury or our children die of new virulent diseases. We are prepared to step forward and accept the challenge to lead by example.

In order to meet that challenge, Papua New Guinea is working to integrate climate change into the principles of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — especially MDG 7 on environmental sustainability, to be underpinned by MDG 8, which refers to the need to develop global partnerships.

Towards that objective, our Prime Minister has recently established the Office of Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability. The objective is to integrate all the wide-ranging interconnections related to climate change: desertification, sea-level rise, air pollution, biodiversity loss, spreading diseases, erratic weather and so on — and to coordinate the best international and national minds through partnerships to focus Papua New Guinea on contributing towards solutions while battling the unfortunate consequences of climate change.

We know that this is a very complex undertaking for a developing country, but we seek to lead by example — but again, in partnership with other friends, including the United Nations and its agencies, to undertake that challenging endeavour. We challenge the United Nations system to deliver as one in that critical endeavour.

As we reflect on the climate change Conference that took place last December in Bali, we do so with a mixed sense of hope and foreboding. While, on the one hand, we are encouraged that there is now a timetable with a start, a finish and an agenda for action, on the other, we are deeply concerned that the entire Bali Action Plan almost collapsed while only really being an agreement to continue talking.

However, looking forward, the next two years will become increasingly complex as we struggle to define common but differentiated responsibilities and the steps that all nations must take to deal with climate change, either through mitigation or adaptation.

If we are to succeed, we must acknowledge that the primary responsibility for global warming and its consequences today falls mainly upon industrialized nations, including the resulting mitigation and adaptation challenges all of humanity must now face. We are very concerned by the hubris of certain industrialized nations that promote emissions reductions in certain developing countries as a precondition for taking responsibility for carbon emissions at home. We seek leadership by example. We say: "Please show us how deeply emissions can be cut in all industrialized countries, rather than simply pointing fingers at the poor in developing countries".

We do not accept that the cost of action is too high for those industrialized nations. Rather, the cost of inaction places an unfair burden on developing countries and the world's poor. Therefore, all industrialized nations must demonstrate leadership by reducing carbon emissions within their own borders through deep and hard targets. That concept has to be the bedrock for any future international agreements on climate change.

Thoughtfully constructed and deeper cuts within industrialized nations can be leveraged to mobilize sufficient and sustainable resources necessary to underwrite emissions reductions in developing countries along with efforts towards adaptation. Specifically, we believe that international carbon emissions markets hold the greatest promise to provide the necessary scale and sustainability of revenues. By expanding and strengthening carbon emissions markets, we may leverage deeper emissions cuts by industrialized nations to finance the necessary systems of positive incentives and adaptation for developing countries. To be successful, we must integrate more industrialized countries, more sectors and deeper emissions reduction targets, but carbon emissions markets need not carry the burden alone. We must also consider selected carbon consumption taxes, reducing energy subsidies, and new and additional official development assistance.

When it comes to mitigation, Papua New Guinea is seeking to contribute in an equitable way. As such, along with many other developing countries, we have been advocating a new initiative to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. We ask: Why should the world care about deforestation and forest degradation? The simple answer is this: If we lose the world's forests, we lose the fight against climate change. Rainforests are the Earth's greatest utility — our planet's lungs, thermostat and air-conditioning system.

Tropical rainforests are being cut down because the world is not paying for those services, so the communities that depend on forests must make their living in other ways. To compound that dire situation, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, emissions from deforestation could account for approximately 20 per cent of global emissions, but action to reduce emissions from deforestation is too important to wait until 2012. Therefore, we must overcome the existing perverse incentive systems, credit early action starting today, and expand implementation in future climate frameworks. We say that if deforestation causes 20 per cent of global emissions, then we must allocate 20 per cent of available resources to address that important source. We must make this happen. For the world's climate, the world's forests and our rural poor, that day cannot come soon enough.

Even with significant emissions reductions over the coming decades, certain impacts of climate change are unavoidable. We are duty-bound to be prepared. While developing countries are not responsible for climate change, its effects will fall most heavily on those least able to adapt. The current mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to fund adaptation within developing countries is frankly, in our view, unethical. How can we justify taxing developing countries through a 2 per cent levy on Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) trades only for adaptation costs that are no fault of their own? In any enlightened society, those primarily responsible for damage must pay for corrective action.

Therefore, adaptation taxes should be levied against the carbon trading of annex B countries and not deducted from the fractional revenues derived by developing countries from the CDM. The present structure is untenable and unconscionable. Therefore, Papua New Guinea will present a new agenda item at the next Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC seeking corrective action on that matter. We seek the General Assembly's support.

To conclude, we will not defeat climate change simply by asking developing countries to slow or halt economic growth. There is no political will to stand still, nor should there be. However, as a developing country, we are willing to contribute equitably towards a common objective. We are willing to do our part and lead by example.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Mr. Andreas Mavroyiannis, Permanent Representative of Cyprus.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): Cyprus has fully aligned itself with the statement made yesterday by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. I will therefore limit my remarks to those of specific national significance.

Situated in one of the most precarious geographical regions that are expected to be gravely affected both by rising temperatures and rising sea levels, with all the consequences that those entail, my country has already been experiencing the effects of climate change for some time. We are cognizant, as I am certain others in this Hall are as well, of the impact that it can have on the everyday lives of people, affecting their health and general well-being and forcing them to adjust their way of life to prevalent climatic phenomena.

The consequences of our vulnerability — the extent to which the economy will be harmed, the magnitude of a possible natural disaster and its human and material damage, and the impact on human life and activity and on our ecosystems in general — are by no means easy to predict. Climate change also constitutes a threat not only to development, but also to global peace and security. Scarcity of resources, including water, food and fertile land, can be a contributing or even an instigating factor in fuelling conflict or accentuating such phenomena as famine, disease, migration, regional instability, social and political unrest, rejection of the other, and an even more unequal distribution of wealth.

Also, at this stage, any prediction as to the extent to which existing damage can be reversed and how we can best — and to what extent — adapt in order to avoid becoming hostages to climatic conditions is pure conjecture. Our collective thinking on this issue must at the very least lead to a widespread realization that we share the same environment and that damage sustained by it anywhere in the world has a global impact.

We can observe that vulnerable States, in particular small island developing States, that have contributed very little to environmental damage are impacted the most and have the fewest means of defence. Many countries, usually small, poor or vulnerable ones, require support in adaptation and mitigation strategies and should be given qualified priority in the area of new technologies and financing.

We are not here to assess the existence or the magnitude of the threat posed by human activity-induced climate change. This has been verified by scientific and empirical data, including those of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The high-level event of this past September and the Bali Conference generated a wide and clear commitment to concerted and integrated action to tackle climate change and to do so within the appropriate multilateral framework for action, which is the United Nations.

Thus, we consider that meetings like these serve to focus this commitment, making it more concrete rather than merely reaffirming it. Our collective thinking to formulate concrete measures on the basis of scientific recommendations must start without delay. This applies to the establishment of a post-2012 climate regime, but also to action that can be taken in the meantime.

In this respect, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General, "Overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change" (A/62/644), and, in particular, the Secretary-General's recommendations on the way forward. We also welcome the document prepared by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination defining key areas of action and an effective coordinated structure for the United Nations system, along with the contribution that the system can make in supporting global, regional and national action within the four key areas of mitigation, adaptation, technology and financing. But we must move from generic discussions to action and to focused and measurable progress.

Cyprus, as a member of the European Union (EU), participates in the policies and decisions of the Union on this crucial issue and is ready to fully play its role both within the EU and on the international front.

A global challenge of this scale should give rise to a sustained and multidimensional effort encompassing short-, medium- and long-term goals. The Bali Road Map, which leads towards achieving a new global climate agreement in Copenhagen, is a significant step. But it is yet one among many that will be required in the efforts of the international community to ensure that current and future generations can live in a safer and more prosperous world.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations

A/62/PV.83

General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

83rd plenary meeting

Wednesday, 13 February 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Kerim .... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Jallow (Gambia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Thematic debate entitled "Addressing climate change: The United Nations and the world at work"

Agenda items 48, 54 and 116 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Sustainable development

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/644)

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Thomas Matussek, Permanent Representative of Germany.

Mr. Matussek (Germany): Let me start by expressing our great appreciation for the fact that President Srgjan Kerim convened this very timely discussion in the General Assembly. We must maintain the high level of attention and awareness that we managed to build up during the course of last year.

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement made at the 80th meeting by Slovenian Environment Minister Janez Podobnik on behalf of the European Union (EU).

2007 was a year of unprecedented political momentum to fight climate change. The findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have made it crystal-clear: the impact of climate change will be dramatic until and unless we take resolute action.

Germany is proud to have taken the lead during our EU Presidency, in spring 2007, to prepare ground-breaking decisions at the EU level on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. As host of the Group of Eight (G-8) Summit held in Heiligendamm, we set further milestones, in particular a clear commitment to the United Nations climate process. Our leaders confirmed that commitment almost uniformly at the Secretary-General's High-level Event on 24 September. And in Bali, we successfully launched a negotiating process to be completed by 2009 with a new global and comprehensive post-2012 agreement. One thing was clear: the United Nations system is the appropriate multilateral framework through which the necessary future climate change regime can be established.

We industrialized countries have to remain the driving force. This is a question of both fairness and credibility. We, the industrialized countries, have to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by between 25 and 40 per cent from 1990 levels, as stipulated by the IPCC.

The European Union is willing to reduce its greenhouse emissions by 30 per cent from 1990 levels by 2020, within the framework of an international agreement. In this case, we, Germany, will even

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commit to a 40 per cent reduction. The German Government adopted an integrated climate and energy policy plan in 2007. Its key elements are energy efficiency and renewables. Let me just highlight the following aspects.

We will massively expand renewable sources of energy. In the electricity sector, we will double the share of renewables by 2020 from the current level of 14 per cent, and we are aiming at a 14 per cent share in the heat sector. We will raise standards for energy efficiency in buildings by 30 per cent by 2009 and by another 30 per cent after 2012. More than $2.3 billion per year will be made available for the modernization of energy systems in buildings.

We remain convinced that a climate-friendly restructuring of our economies is both possible and affordable. Ambitious climate policy does not constitute an obstacle to economic and sustainable growth. On the contrary, climate protection makes sound economic sense. It is a driving force for innovation and employment. In Germany, every billion euros spent on energy-saving modernization of existing buildings secures or creates approximately 25,000 jobs in the building and crafts sector. Over the past 10 years, approximately 214,000 jobs have been created in the renewables sector, with 60,000 of them in the wind-energy sector alone.

In the global efforts to address climate change, the role of the private sector is universally recognized. The question of public-private partnerships, which has been raised in our panel discussions, is crucial. Global action makes climate efforts more cost-efficient, and more can be achieved with the same levels of investment.

Climate change is, first and foremost, a sustainable development challenge. Without a stable climate and adequate knowledge of future climate change trends, we may not achieve the Millennium Development Goals. But climate change is even more than that: it is the most universal and most comprehensive of problems. For some countries, as we have heard, it is a matter of sheer existence; it affects areas such as health, security, migration and nutrition.

Germany will continue to support all international efforts to counter the adverse effects of climate change and to reach a global agreement. But only a United Nations-based framework can make it possible for the voices of all countries to be heard and considered. Only the United Nations system can address the complementary challenges of development and climate change in a coherent manner.

The United Nations system needs to respond on the basis of a coherent strategic vision, setting out common goals and priorities and clearly showing the comparative advantage of United Nations entities in tackling climate change. The report of the Secretary-General (A/62/644) serves as a useful beginning for that process. It clearly states that the United Nations needs to be more than merely the sum of its parts. The real challenge is to efficiently and effectively develop and implement integrated policies. The whole United Nations system must strengthen its response to global challenges and must ensure that that response comes in a united voice.

In the future, the financing of mitigation and adaptation efforts as well as technology transfer will be the key issue. Those areas require new and innovative concepts. As the interactive panel discussions have shown, the United Nations should serve as the key forum by bringing together various stakeholders from private and public sectors. The United Nations system needs to enhance networking capacities and coordination for joint international action. Therefore, if the United Nations is best suited to tackle the pressing issue of climate change, it must intensify cooperation across the system in order to meet that challenge.

As Chancellor Merkel pointed out here in New York last September (see A/62/PV.5), climate change will be the litmus test of the international community's ability to act efficiently and effectively in the twenty-first century. The United Nations is at the heart of that process. Germany is willing to do its share. We are looking forward to cooperating with all partners within the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Aysar Tayeb, representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Tayeb (Saudi Arabia): I should like to thank you, Sir, and through you to thank Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly, for convening this meeting and for the continuous attention that the United Nations is devoting to the issue of climate change.

I would like to associate myself with the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and

China at the 80th meeting and by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Arab Group at the 81st.

Saudi Arabia shares the world's concern about climate change and the challenges it poses, and we are committed to working together towards finding the right solutions.

At the summit of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) held in Riyadh a couple of months ago, Saudi Arabia pledged $300 million to a new fund that will support research on energy, the environment and climate change. That pledge was complemented by pledges from Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, bringing the sum to $750 million. Many other efforts have been made at the national level, but time does not permit going into greater detail here. I will just say, however, that we are committed to doing our fair share.

On Monday, we heard very useful presentations and discussions from experts. The ideas that have been crystallizing from the discussion include the important role of partnerships and the full engagement of the private sector and civil society. Another idea has to do with the great connections between climate change and development. Development and climate change are linked and need to be viewed together.

Less than a year ago, here in New York the Commission on Sustainable Development was deliberating on climate change and on energy for sustainable development. An obvious fact that became crystal clear was that energy is a main prerequisite for development.

In order to meet the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in addressing the challenges of climate change without hindering the development process, we must find practical solutions that achieve the required emission reductions while keeping the energy cycle on its steady path, in order to meet the growing energy needs required for development. In that regard, we need to be careful to ensure that mitigation actions do not create market distortions that would lead to instability of energy supplies and disrupt the development process. Technological solutions such as carbon capture and storage provide win-win solutions and a positive way forward.

I would like now to address the Bali Road Map. In Bali, we reached an important agreement, which did not in any way imply that Kyoto is dead or over, or that the Climate Change Convention is no longer any good. That is why I am surprised by some of the statements I have heard alluding to such a notion. Yes, action to address climate change is lagging. But that is not because there is a deficiency in the Convention or in the Kyoto Protocol; the deficiency has been in the implementation of the commitments made under these agreements.

In Bali, we have reached an agreement on a detailed timetable for the remaining work of the Ad Hoc Working Group under the Kyoto Protocol, which will agree on ambitious new targets for industrial countries for the Kyoto Protocol's second commitment period, targets that will hopefully be met this time.

In Bali, we also reached an agreement "to launch a comprehensive process to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention through long-term cooperative action, now, up to and beyond 2012". It is not an agreement to replace or supersede the Convention or any of its existing principles.

We have agreed to step up contributions from developing countries with actions to be taken in the context of sustainable development. These actions will be measurable, reportable and verifiable. They will also have to be enabled and supported by measurable, reportable and verifiable technology and by financing and capacity-building. And it is not as if developing countries were incapable of taking those actions without the Bali agreement or any other subsequent agreement; the problem is that the tools to enable developing countries to do so were never made available to them.

This is the real challenge. It is the core of the climate change challenge and has always been. Our success through this year and next year will not lie in merely finding some consensus language and a text that we can all agree to. Our success will be in making breakthroughs in unlocking the toolbox and in obtaining the financing and technology required to really make a difference.

Almost all speakers here touched upon the risks of climate change and its negative impact. With the release of the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, I think this issue is no longer up for debate. However, in a few decades, when our children and grandchildren are reflecting on how successful the world was in facing the challenges of climate change, success will not be measured by agreements or treaties. It will be measured only by the tangible difference that we are able to make together.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Stuart Beck, Permanent Representative of Palau.

Mr. Beck (Palau): The waters continue to rise in Palau and everywhere else. Salinization of fresh water and formerly productive lands continues apace. The reefs, the foundation of our food chain, experience periodic bleaching and death. Throughout the Pacific, sea-level rise has not only generated plans for the relocation of populations; those relocations are actually in progress now. Although this litany of disasters has become well known in these halls, no remedial action has been taken. The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) raised this issue 20 years ago. Larger countries can build dikes and move to higher ground, but that is not feasible for the small island States, which must simply stand by and watch their cultures vanish.

We have to ask ourselves whether the United Nations is powerless to act in the face of this threat to the very existence of many of its Member States. Palau suggests that it is not.

The Assembly will recall that last April, under the presidency of the United Kingdom, the Security Council took up the issue of climate change. At that time, while there were some expressions of discomfort with the venue of that debate — a discomfort that we decidedly did not share, I should say — there was general agreement with the notion expressed by the then-President of the Council, United Kingdom Minister for Foreign Affairs Ms. Margaret Beckett, that climate change is a threat to "our collective security in a fragile and increasingly interdependent world" (S/PV.5663, p. 19).

Obviously, island States are not the only countries whose existence is threatened. At that very same debate, Ambassador Mbuende of Namibia characterized climate change as "a matter of life or death" for his country, and he observed that

> "the developing countries in particular, have been subjected to what could be described as low-intensity biological or chemical warfare. Greenhouse gases are slowly destroying plants, animals and human beings" (S/PV.5663, p. 31).

Speaking on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum at that Security Council debate, Ambassador Robert Aisi of Papua New Guinea, whom we heard this morning, observed that climate change is no less a threat to small island States than guns and bombs are to larger countries. Pacific Island countries are likely to face massive dislocations of people, similar to flows sparked by conflict. Such circumstances will generate as much resentment, hatred and alienation as any refugee crisis.

Ambassador Aisi observed then, and we reiterate now, that it is the Security Council that is charged with protecting human rights and the integrity and security of the Member States. The Security Council is empowered to make decisions on behalf of all States to take action on threats to international peace and security. While we heartily applaud the efforts of the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General to shine a light on this awful problem, we take this opportunity to respectfully call upon the Security Council to react to the threat that we describe. Would any nation facing an invading army not do the same? Under Article 39 of the Charter, it is the Security Council's obligation to determine the existence of any threat to peace and to make recommendations to maintain or restore international peace and security. We call upon the Security Council to do so in the context of climate change.

Under Articles 40 and 41 of the Charter, it is the obligation of the Security Council to prevent an aggravation of the situation and to devise appropriate measures to be carried out by all States to that end. While we small island States do not have all the answers, we are not unmindful of the obvious scientific certainty that excessive greenhouse gas emissions by States are the cause of this threat to international security and to the existence of many Member States. We therefore suggest that the Security Council consider the imposition of mandatory emissions caps on all States and use its power to sanction in order to encourage compliance.

We recall that, under Article 11 of the Charter, the General Assembly is empowered to call to the attention of the Security Council "situations which are likely to endanger international peace and security". At the appropriate time, we will call upon the Assembly to do so. In the event that the General Assembly chooses not to exercise the right to refer the matter to the Security Council, we will humbly call upon the countries whose very existence is threatened to utilize Article 34 of the Charter, which empowers every Member State to bring to the attention of the Security Council any issue "which might lead to international friction". I think we can all agree that "international friction" is a very mild term to describe the terrible plight in which the island nations now find themselves.

Our Charter provides a way forward. Our Security Council has the wisdom and the tools to address this situation. And while we debate, the waters are rising.

The Acting President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of Cuba, Mr. Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States and the Group of 77 and China.

For Cuba, this debate is very timely following the world Conference held in Bali, in which the Cuban delegation participated with a mixture of concern, optimism and confidence. We participated with concern because it is becoming increasingly evident, as Cuban President Fidel Castro stated in 1992, that an important biological species, namely, man, is at risk of disappearing as a result of the swift and progressive elimination of its natural habitat.

Indisputable scientific evidence proves that the threat of devastating climate change exists. The past 10 years have been the warmest ever. The Arctic ice is thinning. Glaciers are receding. The sea level is rising. The frequency and intensity of hurricanes are increasing, and 30 per cent of all species will disappear if the global temperature increases by a couple of degrees Celsius. Small island States run the risk of disappearing underwater, despite the fact that they, together with other very vulnerable countries, have contributed least to global warming.

However, we are optimistic and confident, because we still have time to act and the majority of countries have expressed their political will to contribute, in keeping with their respective responsibilities and capacities, to the implementation of an appropriate international framework to address this problem.

The Fourth Assessment Report on Climate Change submitted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change urges us to consider this issue in depth and to take action. However, it is disappointing and unfortunate that the country that pollutes the most and is responsible for more than 25 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions — a country that has only 4.7 per cent of the global population — has ignored the Kyoto Protocol and stands by impassively as more than 190 nations strive to update it.

Furthermore, industrialized countries are not achieving the almost symbolic goals set for Kyoto's so-called first commitment period. Nor are they are attaining the objectives of the Convention and the Protocol with regard to sufficient and predictable financial resources, technology transfer and capacity-building.

We have agreed to implement strategies such as mitigation and adaptation. However, this dramatic situation cannot be addressed without a change in the current, unsustainable patterns of production and consumption.

We have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries, which are responsible for 76 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions, must bear the principal burden of mitigation and set an example. Worse yet, their emissions increased by more than 12 per cent between 1990 and 2003, and those of the United States in particular grew by more than 20 per cent.

On the other hand, we cannot now prevent the development of the more than 100 countries that have yet to achieve it — countries that, moreover, are not responsible in historical terms for what has occurred. We reject the pressures applied on underdeveloped countries to adopt binding commitments to reduce emissions.

The developed countries, which have monopolies on patents, technologies and money, must ensure that the countries of the third world have access to substantial amounts of new financing in addition to the current, paltry levels of official development assistance, and that they receive free technologies and training for their human resources.

Cuba has been striving to implement adaptation programmes and measures on the basis of a solid scientific community, efficient disaster prevention systems and coordinated activities at the national and local levels, despite the fact that Cuban greenhouse gas emissions are insignificant.

Cuba also contributes to climate change mitigation through a set of national programmes — which we call the "energy revolution" — based on energy savings, energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources. Over the past three years, Cuba has replaced more than 9 million incandescent light bulbs and more than 3 million energy-efficient household appliances. That has led to a decrease of approximately 360 megawatts in peak electric demand — amounting to a savings of nearly $400 million — and a 680,000-ton reduction in petroleum usage per year, resulting in a reduction of approximately 1.2 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year. Likewise, intense efforts are under way to develop and apply renewable energy sources, and Cuba participates in regional cooperation activities in the Caribbean to address vulnerability to climate change.

In pursuing our aims, we have had to cope with the ongoing effects of a criminal blockade imposed on us for nearly half a century by the major military and economic Power, which have had severe implications for our development goals.

If we are to address climate change, the following actions are essential. The developed countries must show clear resolve and take concrete actions to fulfil their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. Those countries must make firm commitments to reduce emissions from 1990 levels by approximately 40 per cent by 2020 and by no less than 60 to 70 per cent by 2050. Renewable energy sources must be developed and utilized, and their share in the world energy matrix must be significantly increased by 2025. New, additional and sufficient financial resources must be allocated to meet adaptation needs in developing countries. It is imperative that the Adaptation Fund be made fully operational. The effective transfer of clean technologies must take into account the specific needs of developing countries.

The challenge is great, but we still have the opportunity to leave to our descendants a planet that is not only cleaner, but also more just and equitable in the distribution of its wealth.

The Acting President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of El Salvador, Mrs. Carmen María Gallardo Hernández.

Mrs. Gallardo Hernández (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of El Salvador is grateful for the convening of this high-level meeting.

We wish to acknowledge the timely decision to involve the various sectors of government and civil society in this debate. Indeed, the participation of all of those players is crucial in strengthening the decision-making process in an area of particular significance for our community of nations. Only if we are united will we be able to address the reality imposed on us as a result of climate change.

The delegation of El Salvador reiterates the importance of ensuring that deliberations on this issue occur within a multilateral context, especially in the framework of the United Nations. We underscore that the effects of climate change are now global in nature. That is why we must address those effects on the basis of a universal consensus.

In that regard, we would like to express our satisfaction at the results obtained at the Bali conference held in December 2007. The Action Plan and the Road Map that were the result of that conference pave the way towards making progress towards an intergovernmental dialogue. Our basic focus must be on achieving a global agreement in order to avoid the dangers that result from climate change and an effective reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, in addition to addressing such issues as mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer and financing for developing countries.

El Salvador commits itself to participating in that process. However, we must be able to rely on the active participation and resolute political commitment of all countries, in particular of the developed countries, in order to jointly achieve substantial agreements in the fight against climate change. We know that this struggle is not the exclusive responsibility of certain countries or groups of countries. Rather, it is the responsibility of the entire international community, with no exceptions whatsoever.

As has been affirmed by experts in the field, and as we have unfortunately seen for ourselves in some of our own countries, if we do not manage to right the current environmental imbalance, we will find ourselves on the brink of unforeseen dangers. Among other things, we must note how this issue has had an impact on the procurement and use of natural resources, and thus its impact on the international economy and the very existence of biodiversity, including human life.

In that regard, we are of the view that the issue of climate change, given its own effects and multidimensional implications, poses a serious threat to international security. Our delegation believes that we cannot address such a threat to international security merely from the traditional point of view, as has been the case throughout the 62 years of the existence of this Organization, by linking these threats to issues of war and peace.

We must recall that the former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, referred to such an approach in his report entitled "A more secure world: our shared responsibility" (A/59/565) to the General Assembly on 2 December 2004. The report indicated that the greatest threats to security now range far beyond wars of aggression between States. The international community now faces new threats, such as climate change, as this current debate in the General Assembly shows. We should recall that the current Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, has also set out the collateral effects that climate change can have by indicating that shortages of water and arable land are becoming sources of conflict in certain parts of Africa.

For those reasons, and bearing that new outlook in mind, both developed and developing countries must do our utmost to halt the impact of climate change. Our actions must serve to reverse the negative effects of climate change, and global changes in the economic, scientific and technological spheres must be compatible with an environment that is sustainable in its duration and scope.

Clearly, that requires collective efforts based on the criteria of common but differentiated responsibilities. We cannot lose sight of the fact that developed and developing countries have different capacities for action. That was made clear in the report of the former Secretary-General of 21 March 2005 (A/59/2005) and was reflected recently in the report of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change (A/62/644).

With that perspective, we attach great importance to the role that the private sector can play through getting directly involved in support for the technological assistance and cooperation policies of the Governments of developed countries. It is crucial that the developed countries contribute with technology transfer in order to change traditional energy consumption patterns and thus help efforts to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

To conclude, my delegation would like to express its hope that the statements of each and every delegation become concrete initiatives that will make it possible to collectively address the problems that climate change presents us with, in line with the political commitments undertaken by our heads of State and Government at the high-level meeting on climate change held here at Headquarters on 24 September 2007.

The Acting President: I next call on Mr. Alisher Vohidov, Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me, first of all, to express particular gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General, who has made tireless efforts to consolidate the efforts of the international community to combat climate change, and also His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, for his initiative in holding this thematic debate on this topic.

It is increasingly obvious today that climate change is a multifaceted problem that requires an equally multifaceted international approach to its resolution. In that connection, we welcome the comprehensive approach taken in the report of the Secretary-General in overview of United Nations activities on climate change (A/62/644). We are convinced that the United Nations has a unique role to play in creating a multilateral and universal mechanism for the effective prevention and resolution of the problem of climate change and its consequences.

Uzbekistan is a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol and has been taking consistent steps to implement the international obligations it has entered into. Uzbekistan is carrying out concrete steps to take into account factors allowing for adaptation to climate change in its national energy development programmes, paying particular attention to reducing greenhouse emissions and carrying out programmes on energy savings, the Kyoto Protocol clean development mechanism and other steps.

In that context, we would like to emphasize that we share the view of many of the Member States of the United Nations that climate change is an integral part of the broader international debates on sustainable development. We believe that in combating climate change, it is particularly important to ensure effective partnerships between developing and developed States. As a matter of priority, attention should be paid to tackling the problem of inadequate financing for the efforts to combat climate change.

In the context of preventing the detrimental consequences of climate change, it is particularly important to introduce environmentally clean technologies and to prevent the degradation of natural resources, to make use of renewable sources of energy, to enhance the effectiveness of energy use and energy sources and to optimize the management and use of water resources.

Allow me to refer to a particular component of the problem of climate change, namely, the problem of ensuring ecological security. We have seen that the destruction of the environment can no longer be ignored, as it affects the entirety of sustainable development, social well-being, economic development and ecological balance. Ecological security has been particularly threatened in areas of ecological catastrophes.

One such ecological disaster is the situation in the Aral Sea watershed. The destruction of the Aral Sea, with its rich biological resources, not only has irreversible consequences regionally but also has a negative impact on climate change well beyond the boundaries of the region. Salt and dust from the surface of the dry seabed are destroying harvests and vegetation and decreasing the productivity of pastures and crops. Tremendous economic damage has been inflicted on fisheries and hunting grounds. That set of extremely difficult ecological problems is undermining the very foundations of life in the Aral area, leading to a chronic shortage of irrigation water and clean drinking water.

We welcome the participation of international partners in carrying out concrete programmes and projects aimed at improving the ecological situation in the Aral Sea region. Unfortunately, it is evident that the steps that have been taken and the funds made available thus far are not sufficient for the biological recovery of the Aral area. We expect our international partners to undertake active and more specific efforts to finance steps to normalize the ecosystem around the Aral Sea.

The standard of living of the population living near the Aral Sea, apart from other factors, is affected by one of the greatest problems besetting the Central Asian region, namely, the problem of the use and conservation of water resources. The population in Central Asia is growing, but the amount of water and irrigated land remains practically unchanged. In the mountains of Central Asia, an accelerating process of degradation, deforestation, erosion, waste-matter pollution and a reduction of pastureland is taking place. The glaciers of the Pamir and Altai mountains, have lost approximately 25 per cent of their ice, over the past 50 years, and that process is accelerating.

The ecosystems of watersheds link together all the countries of our region. An overall plan is needed to manage the water resources of Central Asia to ensure that life can continue, and that will require mechanisms for cooperation. We should therefore take into account, in designing our water use regime, every factor that could affect the ecological situation or have irreversible ecological consequences.

I would like to use this opportunity to inform the participants in today's thematic debate that Uzbekistan, in an effort to contribute to the efforts to combat climate change and to protect the environment, has decided to hold, on 11 and 12 March 2008 in Tashkent, an international conference on the problems of the Aral Sea, their influence on the genetic fund of the population and the region's fauna and flora, and ways of international cooperation to alleviate their consequences. The main purpose of the conference will be to discuss the influence of climate change on the standard of living and the health of the populations living in the Aral Sea area, protecting biodiversity and improving the management of water and land resources. After the Tashkent conference, a complex plan of action will be drawn up to improve the ecological and socio-economic situation in the Aral Sea area. I would like to take this opportunity to invite representatives of the United Nations and of its Member States to participate in that conference and to make whatever contribution they can to resolving the problems of the Aral Sea.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Kaire Monionganda Mbuende, Permanent Representative of Namibia.

Mr. Mbuende (Namibia): Allow me at the outset to express our appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this important thematic debate and also to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the activities of the United Nations in relation to climate change (A/62/644).

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered yesterday at the 80th meeting by Antigua and Barbuda and at the 81st meeting by Cameroon, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the African Group, respectively.

Climate change is a classic case of interdependence, in which the welfare of some spells disaster for others. My delegation is pleased with United Nations action to increase awareness of climate change. Today, farmers in Africa — and elsewhere, of course — are aware of the connection between crop failure due to drought and loss of life because of floods on the one hand, and the unsustainable patterns of production and consumption in industrialized countries on the other. My delegation has asserted time and again that the United Nations provides the appropriate framework for discussions on climate change and accountability on compliance with the international commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol.

The need for partnerships to address the challenge of climate cannot be overemphasized. Governments have a critical role to play to ensure compliance with the targets set for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Local authorities also have a critical role to play in ensuring that all activities within their area conform to high environmental standards that are climate-friendly.

The private sector, as the engine of growth and development, has a responsibility to ensure that growth is not at the expense of the climate. That calls for investments in new, cleaner energy technologies that are climate-friendly. In that regard a partnership between industry, government, the scientific community and others is necessary.

The United Nations has an important role to play in ensuring greater international cooperation in the development, transfer, deployment and diffusion of technologies in order to help developing countries cope with mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Equally important are the adequate capitalization of the Adaptation Fund and the sufficiency of other flows of financial resources.

I would like to underscore that climate change is not an isolated environmental issue. It has serious implications for economic growth, sustainable development and life as a whole. It has a negative impact on the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

As a global challenge, climate change requires the United Nations to ensure that its activities at the country level are well coordinated and properly aligned with the development plans and strategies of programme countries, bearing in mind that the eradication of extreme poverty remains the focus of development activities. The linkage between climate change, desertification, land degradation and loss of biological diversity also needs to be fully recognized when climate change is addressed, as these are mutually reinforcing.

In conclusion, I would like to reassure you of Namibia's commitment to the Bali Road Map and Action Plan. We will make our contribution to finding and reaching a comprehensive global agreement by the end of 2009.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Mohammad Khazaee, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for holding the second round of thematic debates on the important issue of climate change. I also would like to associate myself with the statement made yesterday by Ambassador John Ashe, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In our view, the first round of deliberations on climate change in early August last year and the high-level event of 24 September were fruitful in terms of raising public awareness and strengthening political will on the part of Governments in preparation for the negotiations at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held last December in Bali.

The outcomes of the Conference, particularly the Bali Action Plan, clearly illustrate a road map for a comprehensive process to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention through long-term and concerted actions before and after 2012. Therefore, the second round of the thematic debates, here in the General Assembly, should in no way substitute for or undermine that process. We hope that these deliberations will result in the enhancement of international cooperation and the further implementation of commitments made under the Convention.

Now, I would like to touch upon several important points which, in our view, should be fully taken into account in this process.

Climate change should not and cannot be considered in isolation, without regard to such other environmental issues as desertification and loss of biodiversity. Nor should it be discussed without reference to the components of sustainable development. The relationship between climate change and sustained economic growth and their mutual impact are well recognized worldwide.

I believe that the international process on climate change envisaged in the Bali Action Plan must be conducted in a manner which will lead to improved compliance with the provisions of UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, together with a deepening of commitments by Annex I countries in terms of the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the provision of additional and predictable financial resources and the transfer of advanced and appropriate technologies.

The historical responsibility of the developed countries for the release of greenhouse gas emissions should be taken into consideration and the internationally agreed principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should be the basis for this process. Therefore, the developed countries must take the lead and make significant contributions in implementing present and future global policies on mitigation and adaptation.

Due to the severe impact of climate change, the developing countries in general, and the countries and areas identified in article 4.8 of the Convention in particular, should enjoy more support from the international community, especially from the appropriate Funds.

With regard to arrangements for the negotiations, my delegation reiterates the need for the process envisaged in the Bali Action Plan to be transparent and inclusive so as to ensure the full and active participation of the developing countries parties to the Convention. While we are getting ready to participate in the process, we are concerned about the possible consequences of the response measures for the developing countries. Thus, during the forthcoming negotiations, care should be taken to avoid any decision or measure that may lead to further suffering on the part of the most affected countries.

In addition, due to time constraints, we should stick to the elaboration of the four issues of financing, technology transfer, adaptation and mitigation and to their implementation before 2012 and in the post-Kyoto era.

We believe that contributions by countries to the relevant global funds, including the Adaptation Fund, are of the utmost importance. The level of these contributions, particularly from the developed countries, is a clear indication of their commitment to international actions on mitigation and adaptation designed to combat climate change and minimize its adverse impacts at the national, regional and global levels.

I wish to assure the attendees of this meeting of our resolve to participate actively in and contribute to the process, as envisaged in the Bali Action Plan, and to express the hope that it will enjoy international support and cooperation. The success of this process largely rests, in our opinion, on the faithful implementation of agreed commitments, on emission reduction, made more especially by developed countries, and on the contributions by developed countries to the national mitigation and adaptation efforts of developing countries.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Mohamed Toihiri, Permanent Representative of the Comoros.

Mr. Toihiri (Comoros) (*spoke in French*): We fully align ourselves with the statements made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, by Ambassador Friday on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Arab Group and by the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the African Group.

Coming from a small island developing country in the Indian Ocean region, we know more than anyone about the dangers of climate change. In our country, there is a volcano called Karthala, which used to become active once every 10 years. It now becomes active every year, carrying away land, animals and the rest and causing much damage.

Paradoxically, on the other islands, the few rivers that were there have dried up, leaving nature, men and animals completely forsaken. The sea, too, has been extremely destructive. Vulnerability studies have concluded that there is a threat to cash crops and the economy in general owing to the deep intrusion of the sea.

That is why, faithful to the spirit of Bali, we call for the global sharing of technological knowledge, of early warning systems, of financing for prevention and, of course, of disaster management know-how.

In the light of such experiences, our country, which had not earlier acceded to the Kyoto Protocol, took the decision to ratify it on 16 January of this year.

Furthermore, my country, together with those of the Indian Ocean Commission, supports in principle the establishment of a United Nations agency for the environment that would be modelled on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It would have an updated and strengthened mandate, receive stable financial contributions and operate on an equal footing with the other specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

Unless we have genuine international solidarity today, then 50, 40, 30 or even 20 years from now certain countries, particularly certain islands, will only be fading memories for humankind because they will have disappeared, will have been wiped off the face of the Earth — which will mean that we, the international community, will have failed.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Raymond O. Wolfe, Permanent Representative of Jamaica.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): My delegation welcomes the opportunity to participate in this thematic debate on climate change. At the outset, let me say that Jamaica aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, of Grenada on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and, of course, of Barbados on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). We also welcome the statements delivered by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Mayor Michael Bloomberg, which confirm the need for urgent and decisive action on climate change.

Earlier reports have now become indisputable, and the evidence irrefutable. Climate change is a fact that we cannot continue to deny, and together we must act, as failure to do so will ultimately result in our demise. Last year, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirmed that climate change is likely to significantly undermine the efforts of developing countries in their pursuit of sustainable development and the achievement of global development benchmarks such as the Millennium Development Goals.

The vast majority of us agree that climate change poses a clear and present danger to the development prospects and the territorial existence of small island developing States such as Jamaica. The adverse effects of climate change with which we continue to grapple, including beach erosion and sea-level rise, and the alarming frequency and intensity of severe weather patterns and events, such as hurricanes and floods, have caused us to shift focus from our development agenda to relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation.

During the past three years alone, Jamaica and other CARICOM countries have been hit by five major hurricanes. These have resulted in significant loss of life and livelihood, damage to property and infrastructure, disruption of the major productive sectors such as agriculture and tourism, and the evacuation and relocation of several affected communities.

The implementation of appropriate adaptation strategies has now become crucial, as we seek to confront some of the challenges posed by climate change. To this end, Jamaica has launched a programme to increase the use of renewable energy to 10 per cent of our total energy use by 2010 as part of the effort to reduce our total dependence on fossil fuels for energy production.

I am pleased to note that during the recently concluded meeting in Bali, Jamaica was appointed to the Board of the Adaptation Fund. Let me hasten to add that Jamaica is also one of 10 countries in which a community-based adaptation project is soon to be implemented under the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme to reduce vulnerability and enhance the capacity of selected communities to adapt to climate change.

Jamaica has also embarked on an ambitious programme aimed at achieving developed country status by the year 2030. The Government firmly believes that the development, diffusion and transfer of clean, less carbon-intensive technologies, along with the building of institutional and human capacities, will be critical to accomplishing this process.

The Jamaican delegation fully supports calls made in other quarters for annex I parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to significantly reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in keeping with the long-standing principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. We support the urgent pursuit of a second commitment period whereby annex I parties would undertake significant reductions in such emissions. We are of the view that negotiations to this end must be concluded by the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Copenhagen in 2009, thus ensuring that there are no gaps between the end of the first commitment period and the commencement of the second.

While the Bali Action Plan is not as time-bound and goal-specific as some of us had hoped, it sets in motion a process to deliver a post-2012 agreement and outlines an international strategy aimed at, inter alia, developing a shared vision for a long-term global action to reduce emissions and at enhancing action on adaptation and on technology, including an agreement to jump-start a strategic programme to shore up investments for the transfer of both mitigation and adaptation technologies to developing countries.

The potential for technologies to play key roles in domestic and global climate change monitoring, mitigation and adaptation strategies is enormous. Therefore, the transfer of climate-friendly technologies and the provision of new and additional financial resources should be given high priority on the international agenda, account being taken of the needs of developing countries.

We take note of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change" (A/62/644), which shows that the various agencies and programmes of the United Nations, in collaboration with Member States at the national and global levels, have taken a collaborative approach in order to address this multidimensional challenge. Several years ago, upon testing a new breed of horses in Canada, researchers found that one horse could pull an eight-ton load. When they teamed two horses together, they expected the horses to pull 16 or 18 tons. To their overwhelming surprise, however, the horses pulled a 30-ton load. This simple illustration of synergism drives home the point that, by working together in a broad global alliance, we can confront and overcome our greatest challenges.

My delegation therefore sincerely hopes that this thematic debate and other such discussions in similar deliberative forums will serve to add political impetus to the existing framework for addressing climate change within the context of the UNFCCC and that there will be no divergence into a parallel process. Finally, it is also my delegation's hope that it will spur the international community to urgent and concrete action now. We owe it to ourselves, but more so to future generations.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Jaime Hermida Castillo, Deputy Permanent Representative of Nicaragua.

Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Nicaragua fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In the face of the most important challenge that humanity has ever faced, a clamour has arisen from entire peoples whose survival is at stake, demanding an end to the suffering of Mother Earth. That suffering is due to an economic model whose unsustainable and irrational levels of consumption have brought the planet to the brink of collapse. Some industrialized countries are not even attempting to shoulder their international responsibilities and commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In seeking to define a future course of action, it is crucial that we begin by reaffirming that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol remain the frameworks for all future commitments. It is surprising that the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/644) itself suggests that we are negotiating on a new treaty. We reaffirm here that what is being negotiated is new reduction targets for the second and subsequent commitment periods of the Kyoto Protocol. We must ensure that the existing commitments set out in the Convention and the Protocol are met without conditions or contrivances, and we must strive to resolve implementation problems where they exist. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities continues to guide our collective action. The developed countries continue to have the obligation to significantly reduce their emissions.

For our developing countries, the fight against climate change is a struggle to find a model of sustainable development that will ensure our survival. Once again, that requires that the industrialized countries meet their obligation under the Protocol and the Convention to provide access to new financing modalities for the transfer of technology. From the standpoint of both mitigation and adaptation, technology is the key to any viable sustainable development policy and thus to the fight against climate change.

However, despite the promises and commitments made under the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the well-known Monterrey Consensus, financing for development remains a rhetorical exercise. There have been many commitments, pledges and promises, but, above all, there has been much deception. Nicaragua appeals to the developed countries to meet their obligations without any conditions, to display their much-vaunted leadership and to make available the necessary financial resources.

The hundreds of millions of dollars that will be required over the next four decades for adaptation and mitigation must be mobilized. In that connection, it has become imperative that mitigation and adaptation efforts be balanced; precious human lives depend on this. That is why my delegation finds it incomprehensible that, in the face of such urgency, the Adaptation Fund is being financed with only 2 per cent of what the clean development mechanism receives. In other words, not only is the Fund being financed through a mechanism that enables developed countries to shirk their obligation to reduce emissions, but those financial resources are also coming from developing countries and being rechannelled towards other developing countries.

In addition, my delegation would like to stress that the best way to ensure that we fail in our collective efforts to combat climate change would be to establish, as some have suggested, a sort of climate clause in trade relations, amounting to, another — not even veiled — form of protectionism on the part of the industrialized nations. Not only would that violate the rules of the World Trade Organization, but we, the developing countries, would not accept it. It would be the last straw if the countries of the North should not only fail to meet their emissions reductions obligations but should also try to impose unilateral, illegal and unjust measures on developing countries.

As we have already stated, the main aspects of a collective response to climate change are based on drastic emissions reductions and on technology and its transfer. Therefore, the reconsideration of intellectual-property rights must be addressed in a positive manner so that developing countries can utilize environmentally sustainable technologies as soon as possible. Indeed, given the urgency of the situation, declaring such technologies to be for public use and applying the pharmaceutical model of generic-medicine production are possibilities that should be studied very seriously.

While it is true that the developing countries are not under any binding obligation to reduce emissions, we have the moral duty to make the response to climate change a priority in our development policies and programmes. For countries such as Nicaragua, which have been beset by climatic disasters for decades, adapting to and mitigating climate change amount to fighting for the survival of a large part of our nation. That is why the Nicaraguan authorities will continue to formulate development policies based on renewable energy, such as geothermal energy, using the many volcanoes in Nicaragua; solar and wind energy; hydroelectric power; and the use of biomass. In addition, they have recently begun to study the possibility of using the long ocean coastlines to develop tidal and wave energy.

Those are the challenges. We must teach future generations that they must act in a responsible manner. Once again, we must place at the heart of our development women and men living in symbiosis with Mother Earth. Only thus will we be able to overcome the adversity that we are collectively facing, transforming indifference into responsibility. In other words, we must be able to live in harmony with this beautiful and generous planet so full of life.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Nebojša Kaludjerović, Permanent Representative of Montenegro.

Mr. Kaludjerović (Montenegro): At the outset, let me congratulate the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Kerim, on organizing this relevant and timely meeting. Montenegro fully aligned itself with the statement made by the Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. I would now like to focus on the Montenegrin perspective in addressing the challenges of climate change in the light of this thematic debate.

Scientific data, as well as the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, have clearly demonstrated the importance of climate change and illustrated the responsibility to react in a timely and adequate manner to the challenge. As a comprehensive response, both developed and developing countries have to conduct appropriate activities in order to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, following the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Since regaining its independence, Montenegro has invested significant effort in the area of environmentally sound social and economic development. The country is located in southern Europe, a region that could be considerably affected by climate change, according to the scientists. The negative effects can therefore hamper the economic and social development of the country, as well as inhibit our prospects for tourism and long-term sustainable development.

After resolving the issue of our status in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, my country, in partnership with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), has intensified its activities related to the drafting of the first national communication in the context of the implementation of the Convention. We have recently conducted activities towards the establishment of the designated national authority for Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects, and have prepared a number of feasibility studies for the implementation of CDM projects in the fields of energy, agriculture and transportation.

We strongly believe that partnerships among stakeholders to deal with climate change in the areas of mitigation, adaptation, financing and technology are of the utmost importance. The private sector, civil society, media, parliaments, the scientific community and United Nations systems collectively have the responsibility to address the climate change challenge.

We believe that broader cooperation between the Member States and the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes can foster national, regional and global efforts towards an effective and efficient response. The United Nations has unique know-how and expertise to assist Member States in developing integrated policies on mitigating and adapting to climate change and can be a unique catalyst for the dissemination of good practices globally. The United Nations system can strengthen effective private sector engagement and can support the development of national capacities to access and utilize the resources needed to implement an appropriate mix of policy instruments for achieving sustainable growth and development.

Based on the fact that Montenegro is defined by its Constitution as an ecological State, we have recently adopted several strategic documents — the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, the Energy Development Strategy of Montenegro by 2025, the Economic Reforms Agenda, the National Programme for the European Union Integration of Montenegro — all aimed at creating a favourable investment climate, building strong institutions, and defining proper incentives for a long-term climate-friendly development path.

In that sense, however, several issues pose a challenge. Determining the effects of global warming on the overall climate of the territory of Montenegro is among them. The ability to respond to climate change impacts will depend upon the ability to access the economic resources, technology, information, skills and infrastructure appropriate for the specific context of the country. Partnerships among national and international institutions are of particular importance for scientific, technical and human capacity-building.

Following the Bali Road Map and in accordance with the findings of the high-level meeting held in September 2007, Montenegro will host a regional conference on climate change in the second half of this year. The conference will be aimed at, among other goals, fostering the implementation of CDM mechanisms in the Mediterranean region and promoting the willingness of national authorities to realize CDM projects in different areas. Montenegro believes that, for developing countries, the CDM is the key instrument for confronting the challenges of climate change. We therefore believe that the Adaptation Fund, established recently in Bali to finance developing countries in drafting and implementing their climate change adaptation strategies, and its appropriate connection with other GEF areas of action can provide additional momentum in creating more efficient implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

The strategic objective of the United Nations family in dealing with climate change is multifold. It is a common responsibility of the international community to respond urgently to that issue, and Montenegro is willing to contribute to the efforts of the United Nations system and build partnerships to successfully address the climate change challenge.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Fries (Sweden): Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

Climate change is a top priority of the Swedish Government. My country has long made substantial efforts to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases and to assist developing countries to cope with climate change.

The message delivered in the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is simple and precise. Global emissions of greenhouse gases have to be reduced by 50 to 85 per cent by 2050. Developed countries would have to reduce their emissions by 25 to 40 per cent by 2020. Actions have to be taken now. That is a challenge in itself, and yet it is only half of the equation. The other half is that climate change is already upon us.

These are some important starting points for the new round of negotiations under the Bali Action Plan leading up to a comprehensive post-2012 agreement for fighting climate change. Allow me to emphasize three issues that the United Nations and decision makers at all levels may wish to consider as we prepare ourselves for the Copenhagen agreement in less than two years' time.

First, it is possible to combine reductions of greenhouse gas emissions with economic growth. The latest figures for Swedish greenhouse gas emissions show a reduction of 8.7 per cent in 2006 compared to 1990. At the same time, the Swedish gross national product has increased by 44 per cent. The reasons for that achievement are several. One important measure is the Swedish carbon dioxide tax that was introduced in 1990. Energy efficiency and savings and the use of renewables have further contributed.

It is our strong belief that it is necessary to put a price on carbon, and the wider the group involved in carbon trading, the more cost-efficient the emission reductions. The diverse expertise of the United Nations system should be drawn upon to promote the international sharing of good practice, the building of domestic capacity for policy formulation and implementation, and the development of equitable international sector-specific standards.

Secondly, climate change must be addressed globally in the context of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Efficient actions to adapt to climate change and investments in sustainable energy systems have to be undertaken. All development and poverty reduction strategies would have to take climate change into account.

The Swedish Government has established an international commission on "climate-proofing" development assistance. It is an attempt to meet our commitments to help developing countries to work preventively and to cope with the consequences of climate change. Furthermore, it is intended to contribute to United Nations system-wide efforts. The commission constitutes a forum in which a group of prominent experts and policymakers can discuss freely and identify a direction on how to design official development assistance that takes climate change and disaster risk reduction into account. But it will also come up with concrete proposals on how to climate-proof development assistance by introducing risk reduction and adaptation to climate change into the development and poverty reduction plans of poor countries.

The commission will focus on four areas in particular. One is the role and importance of ecosystems in disaster prevention. Another focus will be on urban slum areas. It will also look into slow-onset disasters, such as prolonged droughts and chronic instability stemming from water scarcity. Last but not least, the commission will focus on risk management mechanisms in the insurance industry. That is quite a new area in which some interesting initiatives are under way.

The scale and nature of climate change may sometimes imply a dominant scientific approach to the problem. However, I believe that the human dimension must always be in focus. That will also be reflected in the commission's work. There will be a clear poverty and rights perspective, and the dimension of gender equality shall be explored.

The commission will meet for the first time in Stockholm the day after tomorrow. It will engage actively in relevant processes, such as the climate negotiations and the work carried out by, for instance, the United Nations, the World Bank and the European Union. A final report will be presented in spring 2009. The intention is for the results to be reflected in relevant processes and contribute to a post-2012 agreement in Copenhagen.

The third and final issue that I wish to stress is that climate change calls for an integrated approach to environment, development and security. Climate change is already affecting human security and aggravating conditions in many parts of the world relating to fresh water availability, soil erosion, energy supply, crops and fish stocks. Millions of people could become climate change refugees, thus creating serious migration problems in many areas. Weak Governments and countries in regions particularly affected by climate change would be exposed to risks of instability and unrest. On the other hand, the shared management of crucial natural resources like water could contribute to stability and peace. We call on relevant parts of the United Nations system to collectively address those challenges in the nexus between sustainable development and security.

The United Nations system has a critical role to play in dealing with climate change effectively. No doubt the basic elements of the Bali Action Plan set the course for any future strategy to cope with climate change. We welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to strengthen mechanisms for collaboration on the basis of those common goals and objectives. Existing structures should be used to get the work done.

Mitigation and adaptation have to be addressed jointly, even if strategies and actions to deal with them at the country level may differ. At the end of the day, future progress depends more than anything on the outcome of the negotiations within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol. An effective and equitable post-2012 agreement on climate change must therefore be the foremost priority over the next two years for the United Nations system.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Ahmed Addulrahman Al-Jarman, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): We have carefully read the report of the Secretary-General, which presents a broad overview of how the United Nations would contribute to addressing the climate change problem that threatens the safety and security of people all around the world.

In commending the efforts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to identify the best collective solutions for dealing with the global crisis, we reaffirm that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol are the most appropriate frameworks within which we can address the crisis on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities.

In that connection, my delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Arab Group.

The United Arab Emirates appreciates the magnitude and seriousness of the challenges emerging from climate change and the threat it poses to the security and stability of peoples in many countries, especially the developing countries. Convinced that addressing those challenges requires a global partnership and effective cooperation among developed and developing countries, my country has willingly joined all regional and international conventions and protocols on the environment and sustainable development. We support the Road Map and Action Plan adopted at Bali in December 2007, which mainly call for negotiations among States parties, to be completed by 2009, leading to a convention on emissions reduction that can enter into force by the end of 2012. We hope that those negotiations will agree on a comprehensive post-Kyoto convention on emissions reduction that does not negatively impact the economies and development processes of the developing countries in general, and in particular the oil-producing and exporting countries, among which is the United Arab Emirates, whose economies depend primarily on fossil fuels.

The United Arab Emirates is one of the big oil-producing countries. Eager to ensure a continuous flow of energy to the world markets, my country continues to step up its efforts and initiatives in sponsoring and supporting international activities to find alternative sources of clean, safe and affordable energy and to deal effectively with the climate change crisis. Last month, we hosted the World Future Energy Summit with the participation of Government representatives, scientists, experts, researchers and specialists in environment and energy.

At the summit, the United Arab Emirates announced the launch of one of the largest-ever sustainable development programmes, with an initial investment of $15 billion in projects targeting solar, hydrogen and wind power and carbon reduction and management. It also announced the launch of the Zayed Future Energy Prize, awarding $2.2 million annually to honour individuals and organizations for their excellence in the innovation, development and implementation of sustainable energy solutions. Last Friday, we launched Masdar City, the world's only zero-carbon, zero-waste, zero-car city, expected to be completed in 2016 with a population of 50,000. My country has also supported and contributed $150 million to the fund established by Saudi Arabia at the summit of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries last November, with a $750-million budget for research on the relationship between oil, the environment and climate change.

These initiatives and activities represent one of the many aspects of our national comprehensive strategy to protect the environment and deal with climate change without undermining development programmes in our country. A number of effective measures have been implemented in the areas of renewable energy, air pollution, combating desertification, increasing green areas and clean energy. We have enforced zero-emission policies in all activities related to the oil industries and mainstreamed the use of unleaded fuel in all transportation sectors. These efforts culminated in 2006 in the launching of the Masdar Initiative, which aims to establish a world centre for developing future solutions in sustainable energy through an integrated group of methods and means, including a network of research institutes specialized in energy and the maintenance of stability in world energy markets.

Last April, the United Arab Emirates announced adoption of a strategy that aims at achieving sustainable development in all sectors within the framework of general environmental standards in the country.

In conclusion, we renew our support for the role of the United Nations in meeting the challenges posed by climate change. We stress that it is necessary for the developed countries to shoulder their responsibilities towards this global crisis and to commit themselves during the coming negotiations to implement the recommendations set out in international conferences and conventions related to the environment and sustainable development, in particular, the UNFCCC and its Optional Protocol. We also call for providing the necessary support for developing countries and facilitating their access to new technologies so as to enhance their abilities to adapt, apply mitigation measures, and obtain clean and sustainable energy resources, all of which require that the funds and mechanisms established by the Kyoto Protocol operate in a transparent and just manner.

The United Arab Emirates will continue to cooperate with the international community in its collective efforts to reach proper solutions, nationally and internationally, for dealing with the negative impact of climate change.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Ms. Enkhtsetseg Ochir, Permanent Representative of Mongolia.

Ms. Ochir (Mongolia): At the outset, my delegation wishes to commend the important and timely initiative of the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Kerim, to convene this thematic debate on harnessing the work of the United Nations to address climate change. I wish to also thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his comprehensive report on the overview of the United Nations activities related to climate change (A/62/644).

Over the last three days, we have been actively engaged in exchanging views and ideas on the necessity of taking urgent action, on the importance of forging partnerships and alliances and on how best to streamline the comparative advantages of various United Nations entities in our common battle against the formidable challenges of climate change. It is true that we, the Member States — large and small, affluent and poor — all face a host of different challenges in our home countries and in our respective regions. Yet when it comes to climate change, we ought to rise above all our differences and put the single most important issue — survival of the human family living in a shared global village — at the top of the political agenda.

There is ample evidence, scientific and other, that climate change is a reality. Our climate is becoming less stable, more volatile and warmer. The global mean temperature is rising; it increased by 0.7 degrees Celsius in the twentieth century and continues its upward trend. Seasons are arriving at different times, and the normal variations are increasing. Glaciers are receding, sea levels are rising. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more severe. Droughts, floods and heat waves are already contributing to crop failures, conflicts and a steadily increasing toll of human suffering.

Yet this dangerous trend is an avoidable catastrophe, as the world lacks neither the financial resources nor the technological capabilities to act. What is required is the political will to cooperate. In other words, climate change calls for a change in our mindset, doing away with the "business as usual" mentality. Now is the time to act. Now is the time to deliver on the commitments made under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol. Now is the time to display the genuine political will necessary for building international consensus in favour of stronger post-2012 action, through Poznan and on to Copenhagen.

It is widely recognized that climate change poses a grave threat to sustainable development. There is also ample evidence that the poor bear the brunt of climate change today. Widespread poverty, underdeveloped infrastructure and severe financial constraints all add to the low capacity of developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable ones, to adapt to the devastating effects of climate change, despite their having contributed the least to causing the problem in the first place. Thus, there is an ongoing need to steadfastly adhere to the Rio principles, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Furthermore, ensuring progress towards developing countries' sustainable development goals — in particular the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — requires full and immediate implementation of the commitments made under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, especially those on financing for adaptation, technology transfer and capacity-building.

Even if a comprehensive framework for stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations were adopted tomorrow, a global strategy for adaptation would still be essential, as the world today is already engulfed in further warming because of inertia and the delay between mitigation efforts and their results. An essential part of an integrated global adaptation strategy is a focus on increased financing and assistance in building the capacity of developing countries. Here, both the financial mechanism of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol's Adaptation Fund ought to be substantially scaled up. The impact of increased climate variability on ecosystems and deforestation, desertification, drought and food insecurity warrant high priority.

Mongolia, for one, is keen to develop its national strategy to adapt to climate change, along with the in-depth research on vulnerability and risk assessment, in collaboration with relevant bilateral and multilateral development partners. Over the last 60 years, the mean temperature in Mongolia has risen by almost 2 degrees Celsius. Some 85 per cent of Mongolia's land surface has been degraded. Desertification is rampant. Ever more frequent occurrences of natural disasters like droughts and dzuds have a severe impact on our economy.

To address the challenges posed by climate change, Mongolia launched its National Action Programme on Climate Change back in 2001, in accordance with the principles of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, and has endeavoured to integrate climate change concerns into its national development strategies, including the MDGs-based National Development Strategy up to the year 2021, which was recently approved by the parliament.

In conclusion, may I reiterate my delegation's full concurrence that in order to effectively address climate change we need to forge effective partnerships with all stakeholders. Such a partnership has to be built at local, national, regional and international levels. In that regard, I am pleased to inform this body that Mongolia has offered to host a North-East Asian summit on climate change later this year in Ulaanbaatar. We do hope that such a high-level event will help forge a regional partnership on climate change, thus contributing to the larger global efforts.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Armen Martirosyan, Permanent Representative of Armenia.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): For many years, climate change was a remote topic, a disputable issue that, even if somewhat alarming, was not perceived to be a vitally threatening problem. Nowadays the situation has changed and noticeable transformations in the global climate have translated into a critical issue that commands immediate attention and reaction. An awareness-raising campaign that is being conducted with the active participation of the United Nations leadership, former and present political leaders, as well as various celebrities, has yielded results. It has become clear that real threat-adequate and urgent measures are required.

The Republic of Armenia is a party-signatory of the Kyoto Protocol and as such it has its share of responsibilities. Since ratifying the Convention in May 1993, Armenia has undertaken a number of steps to contribute to international efforts to mitigate the possible dire consequences of the process.

In the framework of the United Nations Development Programme-sponsored project "Armenia — country study of climate change", a climate change information centre has been functioning in Armenia since 1997 with the main goal of strengthening the Information Centre of the Armenian Ministry of Environmental Protection. The Information Centre, with its state-of-the-art equipment, accumulates and updates information on climate change issues. The implementation of the project is directed at identifying and creating connections to both national and international sources of information, which should lead to knowledge-sharing and the prevention of duplicated efforts.

Since the ratification of the Convention, Armenian delegations have participated in 13 climate-related conferences and worked at the sessions of the permanent auxiliary bodies of the Convention. Back in 2004, the Republic of Armenia adopted a plan of action to fulfil its obligations stemming from the Convention. For the fourth Conference, Armenia developed and presented to the member States its first national report regarding climate change.

It has been estimated that, as a result of global climate changes in the coming 90 years, the average air temperature in Armenia will rise by 1.7 degrees Celsius and that precipitation on the territory of Armenia will decrease by about 10 per cent. Those developments would adversely affect not only the climate-dependent sectors, but also the entire economy of our country. The consequences may be even worse. Under the projected change of climatic characteristics, efficient cultivation in Armenia may be reduced by 8 to 14 per cent. That will intensify desertification, which by now has become a burning issue. That data proves that Armenia is taking climate changes very seriously and is committed to working as hard as necessary at the national and international levels to mitigate the negative processes.

Armenia, as a developing country, is not included in annex I of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and has no obligations for greenhouse gas emissions reduction. However, within the corresponding mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention and with adequate international assistance, Armenia is ready to voluntarily undertake obligations for their limitation.

On a more practical side, Armenia has also been undertaking a number of projects, one of which is a large-scale project related to energy efficiency in urban heating and hot water supply systems. The project is based on a strategy developed in the first national report and aimed at the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, Armenia is implementing an energy master plan developed up to 2010, and its emissions limitation strategy is based on the principle provisions of the master plan.

As a member of the international community and of this Organization, Armenia is ready to make its contribution to the global efforts to make our planet Earth a better and a safer place to live for generations to come.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kryzhanivskyi (Ukraine): At the outset, my delegation would like to welcome the initiative of convening this important and timely debate. During the high-level event on climate change on 24 September and the Bali Conference in December 2007, world leaders agreed to move forward in very practical terms. We in New York, within the General Assembly, should work tirelessly to maintain and leverage the momentum reached in 2007 in tackling climate change, and to make tangible progress in negotiations this year.

We are grateful to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for keeping climate change at the top of his agenda and for the preparation of his very comprehensive and informative report on United Nations activities in relation to climate change (A/62/644). That report, along with the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, concludes that global warming is the result of human activities.

My delegation is convinced that the General Assembly is the appropriate forum to discuss climate change in a comprehensive way and to support the ongoing negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We would like to propose holding those discussions on a regular basis within the General Assembly and introducing a separate agenda item, which would allow discussion and action to effectively tackle climate change. We are ready to work with all interested delegations on that matter. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that the outcomes of these deliberations are projected to the regional, subregional and continental levels.

Building momentum against global warming is very important at the national level. In that area, Ukraine attaches great importance to the Kyoto Protocol. We act in accordance with the improved practice of joint implementation and application of the Clean Development Mechanism. Almost three years ago, in 2005, the Government of Ukraine approved the national action plan and introduced an inventory of annual greenhouse gas emissions. Ukraine anticipates cutting greenhouse gas emissions up to 25 per cent by 2020.

My Government has fully acknowledged the link between climate change and sustainable energy. Efforts are under way to transform our currently carbon-based economy into a low-carbon economy on the basis of clean technologies, such as renewable energies, biofuels and energy efficiency. At the same time, meeting that challenge will require strengthened international cooperation in the area of energy efficiency and energy security. Countries with special needs, such as least developed countries, land-locked developing countries and small island developing States, should also receive the necessary assistance and support.

Turning to the issue of the post-2012 emissions regime, we think it should be flexible and diverse in nature, taking due account of the specific needs and circumstances of the States parties. Ukraine would like to stress the importance of striking a balance between the first and second commitment periods. It is absolutely essential that while we are negotiating a future climate change agreement, including its quantitative emissions targets and a time frame for their achievement, we be guided by the basic principles enshrined in the UNFCCC: equity, common but differentiated responsibilities, respective capabilities, cost-effectiveness and sustainable development.

Joint international and concerted action will not be possible unless we build an appropriate architecture and create a relevant institutional basis. Among other measures, it is important that we consider setting up an international technology transfer mechanism with a view to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Donor and recipient countries alike should actively engage in such a partnership initiative. Another topic is adaptation, which should be included in the policy decisions of Governments, the private sector, international agencies and other actors.

A long time ago, Ukraine called for the creation of an overarching organization mandated to address environmental issues in a comprehensive manner. Such an institution should have universal membership and multiple national representation. It should be a mechanism to promote ecological responsibility and a system for international environmental security. Without such a responsible and caring approach, we will simply fail to meet the expectations of our nations.

The Acting President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of Kenya, Mr. Zachary Muburi-Muita.

Mr. Muburi-Muita (Kenya): I take this opportunity to thank Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly, for convening this thematic debate on the subject "Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work".

Kenya associates itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the 80th meeting and by the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the African Group at the 81st meeting.

We wish to express our appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for the informative background paper on key issues and to the Secretary-General for his report, providing an overview of the activities undertaken by the United Nations in relation to climate change (A/62/644).

My delegation underscores the fact that climate change is one of the main challenges facing humanity in the twenty-first century. It is a global issue that requires international collective and collaborative action. Notwithstanding, I wish to point out that there exists a framework for addressing climate change issues within the United Nations. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its affiliate bodies and institutions are ably spearheading the efforts to address climate change. Hence, care needs to be taken to avoid establishing parallel processes on issues related to climate change.

In addition, the focus on climate change should not undermine efforts to tackle other issues important to developing countries, such as ensuring sustained economic growth, financing for development, implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and poverty eradication. For Kenya and many other developing countries, those are among the priority concerns.

Climate change is already inflicting serious damage on key economic sectors in Kenya. Kenyans have recently witnessed increased floods, frequent devastating droughts, reduced agricultural productivity and increased prevalence of malaria, among other climate-induced phenomena. Our road infrastructure has yet to recover from the El Niño rains. Those extreme events are frustrating efforts to improve the living standards of the population. Overall, the projected impact of unmitigated climate change in Kenya will likely have major implications for livelihoods, health, water resources, agricultural productivity, food security, ecosystems and tourism.

The Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is very clear regarding the causes of climate change and the potential environmental hazards likely to affect the global community in the near future, as well as the short window of opportunity available for addressing this issue. We owe it to future generations to act now if we are to avoid the catastrophes predicted in the report. We therefore need to translate decisions reached at various meetings into practical strategies and actions on the ground.

In that regard, all stakeholders should commit themselves to climate change mitigation and adaptation activities in line with the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. In particular, annex II parties should fully embrace their responsibilities under the Convention to mitigate climate change and to commit more financial and technological resources to support adaptation, mitigation and capacity-building activities in developing countries. We believe that the question of climate change should not be confined to the domain of abstract international discourse and negotiations, but must be brought down to finding simple, common-sense solutions and further responding to real threats facing millions of people all over the world.

My country has taken a pragmatic approach by initiating supportive policy and legislative frameworks as well as institutional reforms to rejuvenate and support the sustainable management of our natural resources, including forests and water resources. Particular focus is being given to increasing forest cover in the country in order to improve hydrological capacity. Forests also serve as important carbon sinks and help to provide livelihood support to adjacent communities. We are encouraged by international efforts through the climate change regime to support our efforts to reduce emissions caused by deforestation and forest degradation. In that regard, we recognize the need for institutional and human capacity support with a view to engaging in and leading national efforts to address climate change issues in developing countries.

Kenya recognizes the important role that the United Nations system can play in assisting countries, particularly developing countries, in their efforts to address climate change. The report by the Secretary-General on United Nations activities related to climate change highlights a number of ongoing and potential avenues through which the United Nations can support efforts to effectively tackle climate change.

Overall, and in addition to those areas highlighted in the report, we believe that the United Nations can also assist Member countries in the following ways: building capacity for adaptation and mitigation, particularly in developing countries; promoting the creation of an environment conducive to technology development and transfer; creating awareness about issues related to climate change; ensuring political will, support and commitment on the part of leaders; promoting resource mobilization; promoting the sharing of best practices and experience among countries and stakeholders; and spearheading the establishment of internationally binding norms and standards in the area of climate change. While we recognize that the United Nations has the network and the will to undertake a wide range of activities in this area, it is important to make our proposals with due attention to the existing technical, financial and human capacities within the United Nations system.

In conclusion, let me state that it is noteworthy that, since climate change is a global challenge cutting across all sectors of society, no one stakeholder can adequately address its effects single-handedly. It therefore requires concerted, collective action at the local, national and international levels. Individuals, civil society and the business community alike must work together to meaningfully address climate change. That is why partnerships at all levels are paramount in endeavours to address this issue. We trust that the United Nations system, with its multidimensional and complex networks, has what it takes to initiate, develop and promote partnerships in the area of climate change.

As I depart, my delegation once again reiterates the importance of this debate, which provides an opportunity for an exchange of views among Member States and partners on climate change. We believe this will not only reinvigorate the attention and focus of the United Nations, but will also galvanize international efforts to address climate change.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Ali'ioaiga Elisaia, Permanent Representative of Samoa.

Mr. Elisaia (Samoa): Time and tide wait for no man. Likewise, climate change is impervious to the statements delivered during this thematic debate if our rhetoric is not translated into true commitment and action.

Climate change has been described in many ways. Some have called it the most important challenge facing humankind in the twenty-first century. Some believe it is a security risk of far greater proportions than any military risks the world has experienced. For others, climate change spells doom and the inevitable extinction of their islands from the face of the earth. A few have warned that climate change, if unabated, could result in a redrawing of national boundaries and ultimately a world with a new look.

Call it what you like. Give it a label that best suits your country's conviction. Or try a new description, if you prefer. Whatever you choose, one thing is absolutely certain. As surely as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, climate change is real. It has happened, it is happening and will continue to happen.

Climate change knows no boundaries and respects no national sovereignty. As inhabitants of this world, we are all affected by it in varying degrees. No country is exempt from the wrath of climate change, regardless of whether or not it contributed to its root causes. The origins of climate change have been conclusively proven, both through real-life experiences and by science. These causes have been internationally accepted and are uncontested.

Solutions to avert this catastrophe have been continually elaborated and agreed upon. The lack of solutions to reverse the negative impacts of climate change is not the culprit, but rather the reluctance by some countries to be part of a unified global solution.

Yesterday, at the 81st meeting, the Permanent Representative of Grenada articulated the challenges facing the membership of the Alliance of Small Island States. The statement by Tonga on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States reiterated the same vulnerabilities our islands have been and are continuously exposed to on a daily basis. Regional initiatives in the Pacific to demonstrate our determination to be part of the solution by trying to put our house in order first were highlighted yesterday by Tonga's Permanent Representative and by some of my Pacific island colleagues.

Climate change, to be addressed successfully, requires a global solution. The United Nations remains best suited for that purpose.

The unanimous approval of the Bali Plan of Action, the launching of the Adaptation Fund and the ratification by Australia of the Kyoto Protocol underscore vividly that "where there's a will, there's a way".

Let me add a word of caution. There will always be sceptics bent on ensuring that the agreed time frame of the Bali Road Map will not be met. Too much is at stake for the global good to allow such detractors to frustrate our collective will.

The United Nations has the convening power to ensure that the issue of climate change is not allowed to slip from the world's attention. This thematic debate is an excellent way to keep Members States in tune with and focused on the magnitude of the task ahead. A realistic and practical post-Kyoto protocol is in sight; it is within our grasp.

We all share the same basic needs and aspirations. It is immoral for some to deny others what is rightfully their due because of the helplessness of those others due to consequences not of their making. The United Nations stands for equality and justice. We should turn to it for solutions that underpin such noble aims — solutions that are based not on our economic capacity and world stature, but rather on our genuine needs.

Our Organization should ensure that, climate change is mainstreamed into its multifaceted agenda, given its overarching reach and profound impact on every aspect of our social, economic and political life. Let climate change be the litmus test of how successfully United Nations agencies can deliver optimally as one, as we test the waters under the banner of system-wide coherence.

No single stakeholder has a monopoly on ways to address climate change. Everyone, the private and civil sectors included, has strategic contributions to make. Ultimately, the success of any global solution will be assured only if it is led, driven and owned by Member States and supported in partnership with intergovernmental organizations.

Access to adequate resources to fund our mitigation and adaptation needs remains an important challenge that must be addressed if our modest efforts are to have a lasting impact. The decision in Bali to operationalize the Adaptation Fund is a positive step. We implore countries with the capacity and willingness to provide additional resources to boost the Adaptation Fund to do so. No assistance is too small or insignificant to matter.

Within our region, the launch in April this year of the GEF/Pacific Alliance for Sustainability, of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), is an innovative way for GEF resources to be expeditiously assessed and utilized for our islands' mitigation and adaptation needs. Italy's project to meet some of the renewable-energy requirements of our region, including proposed partnership arrangements with the Governments of Turkey, India, Iceland, Austria and Venezuela, is a manifestation of what partnerships within the United Nations context, or bilaterally, can contribute to addressing needs on the ground.

At the national level, our development partners, both old and new, including international lending institutions and various United Nations agencies, have been receptive to our call for support to meet our needs and priorities in the area of climate change. The decision of the United Nations Development Programme to set up a climate change clearing house for our region in Samoa in the near future adds strong impetus to our national aspiration to make Samoa the true climate change hub for the Pacific region.

While we agree with the cautionary note offered by some of our members that the proliferation of different assistance modalities should be avoided, it should be kept in mind that we all have different capacities and sometimes unique needs that more centralized approaches are ill suited to respond to. Practical approaches, sometimes outside the acceptable norms of doing things, can be quite effective and easily tailored to respond quickly to some of these challenges. Innovative partnerships should therefore be explored and encouraged where their overall contributions add value to our suite of responses to mitigate and adapt to climate change, benefit from technology transfer and know-how and have adequate resources to respond effectively and efficiently to the challenges imposed by climate change.

There is much work to do between now and the Copenhagen climate change conference in 2009. Are we up to the task? Positively so, for we have a common goal, to succeed. For no man is an island to himself, and united we stand, divided we fall.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. John McNee, Permanent Representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): First of all, let me take this opportunity to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important debate today. Let me also thank the Secretary-General for his continued commitment and initiative to raise awareness of, and promote action on, the challenge of global climate change. Climate change is, without a doubt, one of the most complex, dynamic and critical challenges of our time.

We must remember that climate change is not simply an issue of environmental protection. Climate change has deep roots in global economic and political activity. To be clear, addressing climate change also means addressing issues of development, health, natural disasters, demographic change and security. Effectively addressing climate change will also bring about benefits in these areas.

Internationally, the world has seen a remarkable focus on climate change over the past year, along with an increased sense of urgency regarding the need for action. The sum of national actions must drive a collective effort at the international level. Last December, the world assembled in Bali and rose to the challenge of charting a course towards the goal of a new international agreement on climate change which should be developed over the coming two years.

In Canada's assessment, the Bali Road Map allows for the development of a strong and comprehensive international framework. Canada is committed to working within the United Nations climate change process to this end.

One of the most important components of the Bali Road Map is that it recognizes that no country can effectively address climate change on its own and that all countries in a position to act must do so.

In this context, Canada is fully aware of the importance of having all major global emitters take on meaningful and binding emission reduction commitments in any future international agreement. Canada, of course, includes itself in this group. While none of us can predict the outcome of the negotiations in Copenhagen, Canada is fully committed to reducing its absolute emissions of greenhouse gases by 60 and 70 per cent by 2050.

While it is clear that all major emitters must act, Canada also understands that technology will play an integral role in addressing the challenge of climate change, in terms of both mitigation and adaptation. The Bali Action Plan itself has endorsed "[e]nhanced action on technology development and transfer to support action on mitigation and adaptation" as a required pillar of any future agreement.

Transition technologies are required now, both to reduce energy demand and to increase supply from the use of cleaner fossil fuels. Over the longer term, both existing and new clean technologies will need to be widely deployed in developing countries and especially in emerging economic Powers with rapidly rising emissions, where the majority of future emissions growth is expected to occur. Canada specifically recognizes the role that public-private partnerships can play in stimulating the development and deployment of these technologies while reducing their costs.

Reducing greenhouse gases through mitigation and the use of clean technology is only one part of the solution. While most attention is often paid to the discussions on mitigation, there is no question that discussions of the issue of adaptation to the impacts of climate change are of the utmost importance. Adaptation is a concern for all Member States, from the most exposed small island developing State, as the representative of Samoa has just argued so persuasively, to Canada's own vast and vulnerable Arctic.

Even if we could stop all greenhouse gas emissions today, the impacts of climate change would continue to preoccupy us for decades and perhaps centuries. These impacts will have severe implications for water resources, ecosystems, agriculture, forests, coastal zones, human health and security.

Ultimately, these impacts will vent their full severity on our citizens. It is the individuals who are often the most vulnerable and the least responsible for the problems they are now forced to accept who will bear the brunt of the impacts. The importance of ensuring adequate adaptation measures is vital not only to a future agreement on climate change, but also to the safety, well-being and very livelihoods of billions of people.

With this in mind, Canada will continue to participate actively in the Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change. Canada also continues to stress the importance of integrating climate change adaptation considerations into national sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada welcomes the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change" (A/62/644). It illustrates that a large number of United Nations entities are carrying out important work across a broad range of sectors to implement existing mandates. This work should expressly complement and support the outcomes negotiated under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Canada commends the Secretary-General for his leadership in the process under way in the Chief Executives Board to improve the United Nations system's coordination on climate change activities. In particular, we welcome efforts that place emphasis on making the United Nations system more results-based, efficient and accountable.

Canada is committed to the Bali Road Map and to meeting our obligations while working with the international community in order to find a global solution to this global challenge. Canada will play its part by rigorously pursuing a future international agreement that includes meaningful and binding emissions reductions commitments by all major emitters, for without the participation of all major emitters, both historic and emerging, we will never truly address the problem of rising greenhouse gas emissions nor will we manage to avoid the severe yet self-induced impacts of climate change. Secondly, such future agreement will be designed to achieve long-term results. Thirdly, the agreement should be ecologically effective while balancing environmental protection and economic prosperity. Fourthly, the agreement should support the development and deployment of low emissions technology. Finally, the agreement should include measures that address the vital need for adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

It is clear that, in order to ensure success in Copenhagen in 2009, we cannot continue along the same path. We must all be prepared to demonstrate flexibility, engage in compromise, and go forward with hope, commitment and vision. In short, all of us, but in particular the major emitters, must be prepared to show leadership. To conclude, the world is watching, and we must all do our part.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Andrei Dapkiunas, Permanent Representative of Belarus.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus welcomes the agreement reached in Bali on the steps to be taken to reach an agreement that could replace the Kyoto Protocol.

For us, with respect to the outcome of that process, common sense and the simple human instinct of self-preservation encourage nothing but a sense of optimism. However, that optimism is extremely cautious. It was no accident, we believe, that the first day of our debate was devoted to inspirational thematic discussions. Unfortunately, with respect to the problem of global climate change, inspiration — as a process that elicits the urge or capacity to act — has yet to be superseded by action. We are still not bold enough to stop playing tug of war and to begin rather to seek twofold results through joint action based on greater empathy for and better understanding of the problems and difficulties of others, primarily those in a less advantageous situation and need help more than others. We remain as strongly inclined to address even extraordinary tasks as business as usual.

Allow me to cite one brief example of that. Under the Kyoto Protocol, Belarus — a country with a transitional economy — has assumed the highest degree of voluntary obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to the level of the developed countries of the European Union. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol unanimously decided to include Belarus in annex B. Unfortunately, since that decision was made 15 months ago, it has been ratified by only three States. If the amendment is to enter into force, internal procedures have to be carried out by 132 countries. It is clear that, at such a rate of ratification, the amendment to the Kyoto Protocol — the only such amendment — will never come into force.

We call upon all parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the Secretary-General to demonstrate a genuine sense of priority regarding climate change and to promote the speedy implementation by States of the national procedures necessary for the amendment to come into force. Of course, we understand that such a step would not have a global impact, but national initiatives of that kind would set an important precedent. The attention of States Members of the United Nations to an albeit minor technical problem would confirm the international community's collective ability to undertake timely joint action to prevent the adverse effects of climate change.

Belarus understands the importance of a comprehensive approach to the problem of climate change. However, today we believe it necessary to draw particular attention to the issue of the joint development and transfer of environmentally safe technology to those countries that need it. Resolving that problem will also affect the success of efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to promote sustainable global development. The United Nations is already taking practical steps to create a mechanism to expand the access of developing countries and transitional countries to new and emerging technologies, inter alia, in the spheres of new and renewable sources of energy, energy efficiency and energy conservation that would contribute to mitigating the adverse effects of climate change.

We propose that the Secretary-General and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme consider the possibility of endowing regional and country offices of the United Nations with specialists and materiel to develop and transfer environmental and energy technologies. We believe that leading-edge technologies in the fields of new and renewable sources of energy, energy efficiency and energy conservation should become the common property of humankind. Only thus will it be possible to hope for serious progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preventing global warming. We believe that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have a decisive role to play in that difficult process.

In that connection, Belarus proposes that, at the coming session of the General Assembly, a thematic debate be convened without delay to discuss that matter. We sincerely look forward to the active support of Member States and the Secretariat in organizing such a debate.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Jairo Montoya, Deputy Permanent Representative of Colombia.

Mr. Montoya (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Colombia appreciates the initiative of convening this debate, which will certainly contribute to maintaining the high priority that climate change must be accorded on the multilateral agenda. It is relevant to exchange points of view on the way in which the United Nations system can enhance its contribution to addressing climate change. Likewise, we value the report of the Secretary-General and its inputs to the debate.

Allow me to present Colombia's considerations and ideas on the substance of our discussion.

It is evident that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol constitute the primary framework for intergovernmental decisions on that issue within the Organization. The deliberations of the General Assembly should reaffirm such prevalence and recognize the integrity and autonomy of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

The United Nations system can and should focus its efforts on the promotion of and support for the effective implementation of the intergovernmental decisions agreed in the context of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. The report of the Secretary-General describes the mandates of and assigns possible actions to various bodies of the system with regard to climate change. It is essential to analyse the capacities of those organizations to undertake such actions. For instance, it is worth examining the role of United Nations bodies responsible for energy, water and the oceans, as well as their real potential for addressing intergovernmental issues to contribute to the climate change debate.

Colombia recognizes, in all instances, the importance of identifying additional opportunities for further commitments and contributions from the system in that field. In that regard, United Nations organizations must observe five basic conditions. They must ensure consistency with the general orientation provided by the Convention, limit their activities to their respective thematic mandates, take into account their real capacities and comparative advantages, avoid competition for resources, and, above all, be driven by a development-based approach.

From that perspective, we highlight the urgency of taking into account the multiple dimensions derived from the relation between development and climate change that are not necessarily covered by the thematic agenda for negotiations under the Convention. The *Human Development Report 2007/2008* of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) acknowledges several of those dimensions and emphasizes the negative effects of climate change on progress in the fight against poverty and in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The United Nations system's actions to address climate change must therefore ensure coherence among activities to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. That also requires any strategy in the area of climate change to be compatible with the economic growth and social welfare priorities of developing countries. Accordingly, the system must step up its efforts to help close the gap between the implementation of commitments and real progress towards the development goals.

United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have relevant mandates to support the efforts of developing countries to implement their own national sustainable development policies. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization come to mind in that regard.

Support should focus on national capacity-building in the field. That is particularly needed in relation to adaptation activities. UNDP and UNEP can make a significant contribution in that respect.

The promotion of capacity-building is also relevant in specific areas, such as implementing strategies for climate monitoring, disaster reduction and early warning systems; enhancing the possibilities for access to international funds and mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility and the clean development mechanism; the production and exchange of scientific knowledge; and the development of South-South cooperation initiatives, supported through triangular schemes.

Another, equally important aspect involves promoting international conditions conducive to the implementation of measures by developing countries. Among such conditions, we highlight compliance on the part of developed countries with emissions-reduction commitments; an adequate flow of international resources to fund adaptation needs and to encourage voluntary mitigation measures; the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms; and the dissemination of objective and comprehensive information about the implications of climate change. In that connection, Colombia stresses the central role of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as the organ mandated to produce the scientific, technical and socio-economic information necessary to understand this phenomenon. We also wish to point out that, in the promotion of favourable conditions, there is a need for greater cooperation among the various multilateral environmental agreements and between them and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In addition, we highlight the need to increase UNEP's effectiveness.

In the area of partnerships, we highlight the opportunities presented by the Global Compact as a platform for promoting corporate social responsibility in the environmental arena.

My delegation has deliberately avoided a discussion of the system's architecture, which could divert attention from the true potential of the Organization to deal with climate change. In addition to the coherence agenda and the debates on the United Nations institutional framework for environmental activities, what is important is to identify opportunities to contribute effectively in this area.

Therefore, in the approach that we have proposed, the only way to truly deliver as one when dealing with the problems of climate change is to share the strategic objective of tackling major development issues. Moreover, that would be an act of justice for those who, even though not historically responsible for this problem, are those most severely affected by its environmental, economic and social repercussions.

The Acting President: I now call on Ms. Rosemary Banks, Permanent Representative of New Zealand.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this thematic debate.

At the outset, my delegation wishes to align itself with the statement made yesterday by the representative of the Kingdom of Tonga on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum.

New Zealand was very pleased to see the launch in Bali of a new negotiation on long-term cooperative action under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Bali meetings demonstrated the willingness of the international community to boost its efforts to combat climate change, by enhancing action on mitigation, adaptation, financing and technology transfer.

New Zealand appreciates the Secretary-General's report (A/62/644) on the climate change activities of various United Nations agencies and associated bodies. While we note the broad range of climate change initiatives undertaken by United Nations agencies, we see the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as the primary United Nations climate change body. Over the next two years, it will set the agenda and the strategic direction for international action.

New Zealand agrees that climate change and sustainable development are intertwined. The impact of climate change on development is both real and problematic for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. As many have observed, the negative impacts will disproportionately affect poor people and poor countries.

Addressing climate change in development will therefore require greater harmonization of donor efforts and alignment with developing country plans and systems, as encouraged by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. New Zealand is committed to implementing the Paris Principles. For that reason, we welcome the efforts of Pacific leaders in prioritizing the development of national plans of adaptation and in mainstreaming them into national development plans.

New Zealand is a small country contributing only 0.2 per cent of global emissions. While we cannot decrease the world's greenhouse gases by ourselves, we believe that we can make a contribution. For example, New Zealand is developing a comprehensive emissions trading scheme covering every sector of our economy and all six gases, not just carbon dioxide. We are including the challenging sectors of agriculture and forestry. We hope that, in due course, other countries may find this a useful model, and we would be happy to share our experiences with the scheme.

We are also committed to helping find solutions to the difficult problem of agricultural livestock emissions, which represent 50 per cent of New Zealand's emissions profile. To that end, New Zealand has played a leading role in the establishment of the Livestock Emission Abatement and Research Network, or LEARN for short.

LEARN, launched in New Zealand in December last year, is an international collaborative research partnership involving scientists and officials from around the world. The aim of LEARN is to improve understanding of greenhouse gas emissions from livestock and to develop cost-effective abatement solutions. The technologies developed through LEARN will benefit both developed and developing countries. LEARN works as a partnership because of the mutual interest of participants in addressing livestock emissions and because all partners in the network can add value.

Other kinds of partnerships can provide a means for addressing specific issues and for delivering targeted outcomes. Two such initiatives in which New Zealand is involved are the International Carbon Action Partnership (ICAP) and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). We believe that ICAP will play an important part in the development of international carbon markets and that ICLEI can be a catalyst for climate change action at the crucial local and regional government levels.

While we recognize that there is still much important work to do in the coming years in the context of UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol negotiations, we sense that there is a growing confidence among all stakeholders that we can all contribute to delivering tangible and practical action to address the challenges posed by climate change.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

United Nations A/62/PV.84

General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

84th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 13 February 2008, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim .... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Hannesson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

Thematic debate entitled "Addressing climate change: The United Nations and the world at work"

Agenda items 48, 54 and 116 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Sustainable development

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/644)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Hirsch (Norway): I am delivering this statement on behalf of Ambassador Juul, who had to attend to another matter at this very moment. Let me assure you, Mr. President, that this does not in any way reflect the priority that Norway gives to the issue of climate change, which is at the top of our, as well as the global, agenda.

> "The reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have given us the facts, but we can also see them clearly with our own eyes.
>
> "Norway sees this clearly in the Arctic, where ice is now melting three times faster than expected. Furthermore, the extent of the Arctic Sea ice was at a record low last year. The same tendencies can be seen in the Himalayas and elsewhere. Since ice reflects heat while water absorbs it, the melting of ice is a self-reinforcing process that will further accelerate global warming. The melting of the Arctic ice cover will have ramifications for the climate in regions thousands of kilometres away. For example, it is likely that Asian monsoons, crucial for the livelihoods of millions of people, will be affected.
>
> "As many speakers before have already mentioned, we need action now.
>
> "It is a positive factor that we agreed on the Bali Plan of Action, even though we feel we were not ambitious enough. A global agreement on climate change has to have a common vision that matches the scale of the challenge. Norway agrees with the European Union that to avoid dangerous climate change, global temperatures must rise no more than two degrees above the pre-industrial levels. According to the IPCC, that means that global emissions must peak no later than 2015 and must be reduced at least by half, compared to 2000 levels, no later than 2050.
>
> "Industrialized nations such as Norway and the United States have to have cut emissions by 25 to 40 per cent by 2020. We recognize,

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however, that what is most important is that we now need to work together and bridge our differences in order to tackle the significant challenges ahead.

"The fact that the greatest burden of global warming will be on the poor, who have the least responsibility for the current state of affairs, also makes climate change a central issue of justice and ethics in world politics today. Industrialized countries therefore need to take the lead in the efforts to tackle climate change, but all countries must be on board and do what they can in accordance with their capabilities.

"The Norwegian Government is ready to play its part and has therefore decided to cut global emissions by an amount equivalent to 100 per cent of our own emissions by 2030. That way, Norway will become a carbon-neutral nation. Norway believes that being a big exporter of oil and gas gives us a particular responsibility to provide a more climate-friendly option for using fossil fuels, including coal, during the transition to a low-carbon energy system.

"According to the International Energy Agency, the use of carbon capture and storage in the industrial, fuel transformation and power generation sectors can account for 20 to 28 per cent of the CO_2 emissions savings. Norway is therefore strongly committed to developing carbon capture and storage technologies. Hopefully, our efforts will contribute to making that technology commercially viable at a global scale.

"Furthermore, Norway also recognizes the need to bring emissions from deforestation and forest degradation to a halt and has decided to support forestry efforts in this context with more than $500 million annually. Through effective measures against deforestation, we can achieve large cuts in greenhouse gas emissions quickly and at a low cost.

"We welcome the significant developments at Bali on the need to bring reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation seriously into the negotiations for a post-2012 agreement. This is a difficult sector to tackle, and a comprehensive effort with close cooperation among all parties involved will be necessary to meet all the challenges we face.

"The world cannot choose between development and environment. We need both. In fact, without tackling the problem of climate change, development will be harder to achieve and definitely more costly. Sustainable development will therefore be a key factor. So will developing mechanisms that reward environment-friendly practices. We will also need a major push for new technologies. Rapid technological progress, as well as the rapid transfer of technology, is vital for achieving sustainable development.

"Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/644), which gives a useful overview of the activities of the United Nations. I can see from the report that many things are being done at both the local and global levels, but the report also underlines the need for the United Nations to streamline its efforts.

"The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Yvo de Boer, has talked about the need for a 'Climate Change Marshall Plan'. I agree with this idea and the principles behind it, but in this respect it will be important first that the United Nations can deliver as one and, secondly, that it can coordinate and cooperate with international financial institutions, as well as donor and programme countries, so that a 'Climate Change Marshall Plan' can deliver results effectively."

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Jeem Lippwe, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Lippwe (Federated States of Micronesia): I wish to express my appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for organizing this meeting to discuss the important issue of climate change. It is not only fitting, but indeed appropriate that we do this.

The *Human Development Report 2007/2008* addressed the clear link between human development and climate change. In recent years, the people of Micronesia have had to witness the consequences associated with climate change. More intense storms with higher wind speeds, higher tides and wave surges have damaged our subsistence agriculture and fishing, as well as endemic marine and terrestrial species, including coral reefs. Increasingly, extreme weather conditions lead to droughts, destroyed crops, contaminated wells, eroding beaches and unprecedented land slides. These effects pose a great threat to my country's culture, livelihood and sustainable development.

If climate change continues at this pace, we might be forced to abandon our islands. Relocation is already happening in several Pacific islands, including my own. That clearly shows that small island States, which have contributed little to the causes of climate change, are the ones now suffering the most. Their inhabitants are strongly affected by climatic disasters, and are therefore victims of the effects created by the intimate relationship between poverty and exposure to climate risks.

The latest Human Development Report traces climate-related risks to the energy consumption patterns and political choices of the major emitters. We therefore ask those who pollute the most to take responsibility and underwrite the cost of adaptation in developing States, particularly in small island developing States.

Fighting the consequences of climate change leads to a growing dependence on technical and financial support from partners. How can countries like ours, which are so reliant on the environment, improve their current situation if there exists so little international cooperation on the issues of mitigation and adaptation?

Micronesia has already adopted mitigation and adaptation measures in its infrastructure and strategic development plans — for example, initiatives that protect mangrove areas and coastal beaches and climate-proofing procedures for infrastructure. But the truth is that that is as much as we can do given our financial resources. What opportunities does a small island developing State like Micronesia have? Being a federation of islands, situated only a few metres above sea level, how can we defend ourselves against rising sea levels? One possible solution — to build sea walls around every island in Micronesia — would not only mean a huge investment, but it would also be impractical.

Investing in renewable sources of clean energy in vulnerable countries will help us to meet our energy needs and combat climate change. Support for development and the utilization and distribution of renewable energy technologies to small island developing States is necessary. In order to facilitate that, it is important to mainstream the Mauritius Strategy into all United Nations processes.

As climate change progresses, basic human rights — such as the right to food, the right to safe water, the right to education, health and development and the right to exist — are in danger, especially for small island developing States. The effects of climate change will slowly remove basic human rights from society. The United Nations must address those interrelations.

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person". Not to act on the threats climate change imposes on us would lead to a violation of those universal human rights. Forcing inhabitants to leave their ancestral homelands because of changes to the climate caused by other nations would certainly qualify as a violation of article 3.

I want to emphasize that we are all responsible for the future of planet Earth. Engaging actively in the prevention of climate change is a moral obligation that all should be willing to fulfil. The attention paid to climate change worldwide is a step in the right direction. But what we all need to do is to collectively find a way to prevent further damage to the planet for future generations through cooperation and communication. I know this debate is part of that process.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Ms. Melanie Santizo-Sandoval, the representative of Guatemala.

Ms. Santizo-Sandoval (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is grateful for this renewed opportunity to delve into the issue of climate change, especially as it pertains to the United Nations system. Before we do so, I should like to associate Guatemala with the statement delivered by Ambassador Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Instead of once again reiterating what Guatemala and the Central American subregion have suffered as a result of the devastating effects of this phenomenon, my delegation would like to focus on what the future holds for us as a Latin American country in our struggle to address this problem.

As pointed out by a recent report by the United Nations Environment Programme, the Latin American and Caribbean region as a whole only produces 5 per cent of the world's greenhouse gases. Nevertheless, we face a disproportionate series of threats resulting from the negative effects of climate change and global warming. In the past 12 years, the region has experienced historically high temperatures, natural disasters and desertification — all of which affect and hamper our economic and social development. Our ongoing efforts to eradicate poverty are becoming even more of an uphill struggle.

The efforts of the United Nations system, and any partnership established with the private sector or civil society to be implemented at the local or national level, should of course serve to support the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Today's thematic debate is an opportunity to identify ways to more effectively support the Convention. As we meet to focus on the roles of the United Nations system and partnerships vis-à-vis climate change, we must not forget that Member States themselves have an arduous task ahead.

With the recent conclusion of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention, we now have some good news — for example, the Bali Road Map, the decisions taken with regard to deforestation and the operationalization of the Adaptation Fund. Nevertheless, the negotiations were not easy. The agreements reached are merely the beginning of a more demanding negotiating process — one that will require genuine compromise and the search for serious solutions.

I should like to say once again that the Framework Convention is the appropriate forum to address climate change. The adoption of the Bali Road Map was in effect merely a courageous decision to launch a complicated process. At the end of April, the working groups that were recently established will begin their work. The battle to defeat climate change has barely begun.

In that regard, among other things, my delegation would like to underscore the importance of finally beginning to address the issue of deforestation in a more comprehensive manner within the framework of the Convention. We must not forget that protecting forests should benefit all those involved — those of us who will benefit from conserving them as well as the peoples who depend on forests for their development and well-being. Finding solutions to such dilemmas will be challenging.

With regard to developing countries, we are working to adapt to climate change. As we said during last September's high-level event on climate change, given Central America's special vulnerability to climate change, a summit of the region's Presidents will be held in Honduras in April 2008 to discuss climate change and the environment. The summit will consider a Central American climate change and environment strategy that integrates efforts to improve information with a regional adaptation plan, together with a programme aimed at promoting the establishment of a new economic sector for climate-friendly goods and services.

As we in developing countries make efforts to adapt to climate change, annex I developed countries have unavoidable commitments in the areas of emissions reduction, technology transfer and financing that they should meet, instead of making them part of their rhetoric or trying to modify or renegotiate them every time we have a debate, a dialogue or a negotiation in the context of the Convention.

On the global level, the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties has charted the path ahead of us. My delegation hopes that, throughout this debate and in subsequent meetings on climate change, there will be real progress towards meeting commitments and establishing agreements that truly reflect the fact that we have common but differentiated responsibilities with regard to climate change.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Tirtha Raj Wagle, representative of Nepal.

Mr. Wagle (Nepal): At the outset, allow me to express my delegation's appreciation to the President for convening this debate on climate change. We also thank the Secretary-General for his useful reports which provide us an overview of the United Nations environment activities. My delegation is confident that this debate will help accelerate the constructive momentum generated by the Bali Road Map since its adoption last December.

Let me also associate my delegation with the statements made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Bangladesh on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

It is an irony that the LDCs and small island developing States, which are least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, are bearing the brunt of the effects of global climate change. These countries are struggling to eradicate poverty, while their scarce resources, meant for development, are swallowed up by unforeseen expenditures as climatic calamities increase unabated along the way.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of partnership and cooperation among government authorities, the United Nations, development agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and the business community in creating a sustainable climate future. We need to galvanize common efforts under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, by sincerely fulfilling the obligations and commitments made in accordance with the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities".

Nepal is serious about addressing climate change. We have incorporated a climate change perspective in our national development strategies and country-specific priorities. The expansion of alternate and renewable energy sources has been encouraged. Successful community forestry development programmes and programmes introducing household biogas plants for cleaner domestic lighting and cooking have been carried out with the cooperation of NGOs.

These initiatives have brought social and environmental benefits to rural areas and have effectively contributed to environmental sustainability by steering us onto a cleaner energy path, ending deforestation, encouraging afforestation and preserving biodiversity. We need to foster such local environmental efforts through increased technical support.

As a country with snow-capped mountains and over 2,300 glacial lakes in the Himalayan region, Nepal is dangerously exposed to glacial lake outburst floods due to snow melting and the unforeseen consequences to the people living downstream.

The depletion of Himalayan glaciers means reduced water resources for one fifth of humankind. It will have a detrimental effect on our hydropower potential and agricultural production. Furthermore, it will cause the failure of sustainable mountain tourism efforts.

The urgent adaptation needs of poor and vulnerable countries like Nepal should be addressed before it is too late to avert irreversible damage to human development potential.

We underscore the importance of scientific information and public awareness to improve early warning capacity as well as to build resilience and preparedness in vulnerable communities. In this regard, we urge the international community to support the establishment of a research centre in Nepal with a view to facilitating the scientific assessment of climate change in the Himalayas and adaptation to it.

Nepal appreciates the effective role of the United Nations for adaptation and mitigation efforts at the country level. We emphasize that greater attention should be given to the question of providing sustained, swift and substantial financial and technical assistance to the LDCs, poor mountainous countries and small island developing States.

It is equally imperative that the Global Environmental Facility and its implementing agencies be more proactive in operationalizing technical and funding resources, including the Least Developed Countries Fund. Procedural aspects or any other technicalities should be simplified so as to ensure efficient implementation of national adaptation programmes of action.

Similarly, the clean development mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol should be made more inclusive and should cover small-scale environmental conservation projects at the local level, thereby bringing social and environmental benefits to poor people while promoting low-carbon investments.

Thanks to the scientific evidence presented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and recent studies on the economics of climate change, and thanks to the placing of climate change at the top of the global agenda, we are all now aware that we cannot afford the cost of inaction.

The international community should stay focused, linking the climate change issue to a sustainable development agenda and paying special attention to the creation of human development opportunities for poor countries and vulnerable communities.

In closing, let me reiterate that there is no other option but to immediately draw up a concrete multilateral action plan with binding targets on greenhouse gas emissions and a built-in monitoring mechanism. The need to make technological solutions affordable and readily transferable from developed to developing countries is more pressing than ever, as is the need to generate new, additional and predictable financial and technical resources for immediate adaptation and investment in a sustainable development infrastructure.

My delegation is committed to working in concert towards the timely achievement of an ambitious framework for a post-2012 Kyoto world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Sirodjidin M. Aslov, Permanent Representative of Tajikistan.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to express our appreciation to the President for organizing today's thematic debate on climate change. I also wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express my delegation's gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless efforts in advancing the issue of climate change, thanks to which it has risen to the very top of the United Nations agenda.

Last year, as a result of these particular efforts, States and international organizations attended the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, which culminated in the Bali Action Plan and the definition of a strategic framework for near-term cooperative efforts in the areas of adaptation, mitigation, technology and financing.

I shall confine my remarks to adaptation. As was affirmed during the High-level Event on Climate Change in September 2007, adaptation has become inevitable, given the ongoing climate changes.

Vivid proof of this statement is the current unfavourable weather conditions faced by my country. In January and February in Tajikistan's valleys, the temperature dropped as low as minus 18 to minus 23 degrees Celsius, which is 8 to 13 degrees lower than usual. This severe cold was followed by heavy snowstorms.

For the past 50 years our weather records have never registered such an extremely cold winter. As a consequence of this cold, rivers were frozen and numerous pumps and water supply networks were damaged. This actually caused an energy crisis, as a result of which the work of a great number of industrial enterprises was suspended. Almost all winter crops were affected, and severe damage was done to fruit trees, vineyards and the like. The estimated economic damage amounted to several hundred million dollars.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the United Nations, the United Nations Development Fund, the World Bank, the World Food Programme and various specialized agencies, as well as to a number of Member States, for the assistance and support given to my country.

We support the thesis that climate change and development are inseparable elements of a common agenda — sustainable development, which is based on three components: economic development, social development and environmental protection.

In that connection, we also believe that another very important component deserves to be specifically addressed — a component without which life on Earth cannot be sustained: water. It is common knowledge that the shaping of climate and the emergence of life are closely connected to this natural resource, which, like the climate itself, must be treated with care. Some areas of our planet are already experiencing chronic shortages of drinking water. Against the background of the ever-increasing effects of climate change, particularly in the dry regions of our planet, the issues of supplying the population with drinking water and developing the many water-dependent economic sectors are becoming increasingly urgent.

A unique natural resource, water is used by humanity for drinking, producing food, manufacturing goods and generating alternative forms of electric energy, which in turn are essential for the success of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to provide access to electric energy and, ultimately, to achieve sustainable development.

For that reason, we believe it is important to accord special attention to the issues related to water supply and to hold a high-level event or convene a special session of the General Assembly on those issues with a view to discussing current progress, adopting specific measures aimed at achieving the

MDGs and implementing the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", and the International Year of Sanitation.

Finally, I should like briefly to discuss another aspect of climate change: natural disasters, which have been occurring more frequently and on a larger scale in recent years. Water-related disasters account for the majority of natural disasters throughout the world. Floods, mud flows, landslides, droughts and other water-related disasters have a considerable impact on the well-being of countries. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the current trends are likely to produce an even worse scenario, because the scale and frequency of floods and droughts could increase in the twenty-first century as a result of climate change. Moreover, the losses caused by natural disasters are more severe in developing countries than in industrial nations.

We call for enhanced cooperation among Member States and international organizations in this area. To that end, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has decided to make a practical contribution to this cause by holding an international conference on water-related disaster reduction in Dushanbe on 27 and 28 June 2008. We hope that the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as Member States, will participate actively in the Dushanbe conference.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Bature Lawal, representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Lawal (Nigeria): On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I wish to commend Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly, for once again convening a thematic debate to address what the Secretary-General has aptly described as the defining issue of our time. This debate is indeed timely, as it affords the international community the opportunity to evaluate and maintain the momentum of the success recorded at Bali.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the African Group and by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Nigeria welcomes the Bali Road Map, which has set the stage for the establishment of a comprehensive and all-inclusive post-2012 climate change regime. The Road Map has thus rekindled hope not only that negotiations will be advanced, but also that action will be taken on the key issues of adaptation, mitigation, financing, technology and deforestation.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/62/644) offered useful insights into how the United Nations system can assist in addressing climate change. Nigeria, as a strong advocate of global partnerships, is convinced that measures to address climate change should be taken within the United Nations framework. In our view, the daunting challenge facing developing countries is how to address climate change without compromising or impeding the implementation of the development agenda of those countries — particularly the achievement of internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. In that respect, measures to address climate change and sustainable development strategies should be mutually reinforcing.

We believe that the United Nations system is uniquely placed to facilitate the implementation of the commitments set out in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, particularly the commitments of the developed countries to reduce emissions and to support developing countries with the requisite technology and financing for addressing climate change.

Similarly, the United Nations system could assist developing countries in promoting the use of new and renewable forms of energy, such as solar power and wind energy, at an affordable cost and in promoting research on drought-resistant and saline-tolerant crops. However, we urge caution with regard to the production of biofuels in areas where it could threaten food security. We continue to draw attention to Lake Chad, which is drying up rapidly as a result of climate change, and reiterate our appeal to the international community, and particularly the United Nations system, to complement the efforts of African countries to reverse that trend.

Another important matter in addressing climate change is the promotion of clean energy technology, especially as it relates to the carbon market and to carbon capture and storage. However, these involve highly complex and technical terminologies that are not well understood by the layperson. Moreover, many countries are wary about the safety of carbon capture and storage technology. It would therefore behove the United Nations system, using its global outreach, to launch a sustained public enlightenment campaign aimed at explaining the relevant mechanisms and allaying the fears of some developing countries as to the safety and viability of carbon capture and storage technology.

One serious impediment to the transfer of new and renewable technologies to developing countries is the issue of intellectual property rights. In that respect, we suggest that, just as we facilitated the Aid for Trade Initiative, we facilitate aid-for-technology transfer, in the form of incentives offered by developed countries to their multinational companies to make the use of patented technologies affordable for developing countries. The United Nations system could also play a vital role in taking stock of the technologies that are in the public domain, free of charge, and making such technologies available to developing countries. We also support the idea of setting up a monitoring mechanism to regularly assess the implementation of the developed countries' obligations on technology transfer.

One important initiative that could be vigorously promoted by the United Nations system is the Strategic Investment Program for Sustainable Land Management in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is being coordinated by the Global Environment Facility and the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment. Through that initiative, about $1 billion was to be raised to rehabilitate damaged and degraded lands and to prevent new land degradation. One key aspect of the initiative is the provision of funds, expertise and know-how directly to grass-roots organizations, local communities and farmers to combat land degradation. It is pertinent therefore for all the relevant United Nations agencies to work in a coordinated manner to ensure the success of that laudable initiative in Africa.

In a similar vein, we call on the United Nations agencies to redouble their efforts in assisting African countries to garner an equitable share of clean development mechanism projects through the Nairobi Framework.

Finally, we hope the upcoming negotiation process in Poland and Copenhagen will be transparent and all-inclusive, devoid of the selectiveness that was occasionally witnessed in Bali, and will, in line with the Bali Road Map, produce the desired results by the target date of 2009.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Alpha Ibrahima Sow, Permanent Representative of Guinea.

Mr. Sow (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I wish, on behalf of the Republic of Guinea, to express our full appreciation for the President's welcome initiative in holding this thematic debate of the General Assembly on climate change. I also wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his report (A/62/644), which provides an exhaustive overview of the work carried out by the United Nations system on climate change.

I wish to associate myself with the statements, at the 80th meeting by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and at the 81st meeting by Bangladesh on behalf of the least developed countries and by Cameroon on behalf of the African Group.

In placing climate change at the centre of the political agenda, the international community reaffirms its determination to meet this urgent and critical global challenge, which calls for both individual and collective responses. In the general debate of September 2007 and the high-level meeting convened by the Secretary-General and supported by the impetus of the Bali objectives and Road Map, the General Assembly provides an irreplaceable framework for action and cooperation on the multilateral level to promote the fruitful negotiation of an international regime on climate change for the period after 2012.

My country welcomes the laudable results of the Bali conference, which succeeded in launching negotiations on climate change in order to reach a general global agreement before the end of 2009.

For the Republic of Guinea, climate change constitutes a challenge to both peace and security and to sustainable development. Rapidly advancing global warming is seriously affecting my country and the region, with considerable consequences in terms of environmental disruption, desertification and effects on natural and water resources. Without multiplying the alarmist, well-known and recognized examples, I can emphasize that if nothing is done right away, our region could be condemned to destitution and poverty, with no real hope of attaining the Millennium Development Goals by the planned date.

In that context, we welcome the active participation of the least developed countries and the

Group of 77 in the Bali negotiations and support the international community's focus on areas of concrete action, namely mitigation, adaptation, capacity-building, technology and financing, sustainable development, et cetera. After Bali, the world needs clear and firm commitments and, above all, action, because the efforts undertaken thus far remain insufficient, even given the modest promises made and what is at stake.

As the President has emphasized, the current debate cannot replace the negotiations launched in Bali, but it could influence the process by encouraging, in a coordinated and effective manner, partnership on all levels — national, regional and global — among Member States, the United Nations system and other participants, including the private sector, civil society, financial institutions, universities, scientists and researchers, et cetera. My country welcomes the inclusive participation of all actors in the area of climate change and development in this current debate. We hope to see the gradual establishment of a global agreement in accordance with the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities.

We also recall the urgent need to fully mobilize the necessary financial, technical and institutional tools expected under the Bali framework convention, to strengthen the capacity for adaptation of the poorest and most vulnerable countries to the harmful — and often catastrophic and unforeseeable — effects of climate change. In that context, we must undertake to make the Nairobi Framework plan operational, in order to ensure the participation of developing countries in the development mechanism itself.

My country welcomes the launching of numerous national, bilateral and multilateral initiatives to improve the living conditions of populations and to reduce poverty and marginalization while taking the environment into consideration. We therefore express our gratitude to all the countries and partners that have made concrete, measurable and targeted commitments to support in practical terms the efforts of the developing countries in confronting climate change.

Allow me to conclude by quoting the President's words, which were inspired by his resolute commitment to the fight against climate change, which we share.

> "What we need is a common vision, a global consensus and a global alliance for action, shared by individuals, the media, lawmakers, business leaders, Governments, regional organizations and, ultimately, the global community embodied in the United Nations. Only then will we have a chance to tackle this enormous challenge to our way of life."

The Acting President: I give the floor next to Ms. Paulette Bethel, Permanent Representative of the Bahamas.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): At the outset, the Bahamas would like to align itself with the statements made at the 80th meeting by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and at the 81st meeting by Grenada on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, and Barbados on behalf of the Caribbean Community. The Bahamas also welcomes the convening of this debate, finding the subject matter particularly topical, and would like to take this opportunity to add a few comments from a national perspective.

We all acknowledge the import of the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and its conclusion that climate change is a result of human activities. For those of us who live at sea level, the picture is particularly bleak. The Bahamas, labelled among the 100 countries most vulnerable to climate change, is now facing inundation from storm surges, depletion of fragile water resources, erosion and further land degradation, as the sea begins to reclaim the land that rose out of the last ice age. It is this reality that informs our desire for urgent action on climate change.

A short while ago, the infrastructure of the central Bahamas was badly damaged when a little over 50 per cent of our annual rainfall flooded the islands over a two-day period. Tropical storm Noel caused economic loss to our salt industry and crops, and our vital tourist industry was also disrupted. A life was lost. That occurred despite having an advanced early warning system and natural disaster system in place. Clearly, there is much more to do.

The Government of the Bahamas recognizes that the future development of the Bahamian people will depend on the responsible exploitation of the natural and man-made resources available in the country, in the context of a comprehensive policy framework. However, we must acknowledge that climate change presents more complex global challenges, warranting a reassessment of our collective response to this issue and a renewal of our efforts in support of the broader sustainable development question — the wider context within which climate change should be considered.

In that connection, the Bahamas welcomes the opportunity to add to the debate on how best the United Nations system, in collaboration with Member States, the private sector and civil society, can collectively support the most important work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) — the primary comprehensive framework for addressing climate change — and the implementation of commitments under the Convention, its Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan.

In that context, the Bahamas notes with interest the report of the Secretary-General on the overview of the United Nations activities in relation to climate change, particularly as it refers to supporting global, regional and national action on climate change. We agree that the United Nations, given its universality, has a central role in supporting global efforts to meet the global challenge of climate change and in providing policy direction to support the Bali Action Plan. In that connection, the Bahamas would indeed welcome the strengthening of the United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Small Island Developing States Unit, in its efforts to assist national adaptation activities and national sustainable development activities in general.

It is worth noting in that regard that the Bahamas has initiated policies to respond to climate change at the national level; however, our adaptation options are limited. In fact, in some cases, particularly the case of some of the smaller islands in the archipelago, the only option may be retreat and abandonment of property. The problem for the Bahamas, as with many other small island developing States, is that we are often found lacking with respect to indigenous science and technology capability. There are also many gaps in existing data and information and a lack of tools to assess the physical, social and economic impacts on the most vulnerable sectors of our society and economy.

Access to international assistance, new and additional financial resources and the availability of scientific and technological solutions are critical in our efforts to reduce vulnerability and achieve sustainable development. In that context, the Bahamas wishes to welcome the decision taken by the parties to the Kyoto Protocol to continue the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol. We anticipate that such a decision would lead to the necessary support to developing countries in the areas of adaptation, mitigation, technology and financing.

The Bahamas also welcomes in particular the operationalization of the Adaptation Fund during the Bali Conference last year. That, together with mechanisms such as the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility, would do much in the way of assisting countries like the Bahamas to access funding for recovery from natural disasters and for other vital adaptation activities. The recent contribution of $2.5 million by the Government of Ireland to the Facility is most welcome and greatly appreciated. We sincerely thank Ireland for that generous gesture of partnership and support.

As I conclude, I would once again like to thank the President for convening this most timely debate and hope that events such as these will continue to gather the momentum necessary to effect real change.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Somduth Soborun, Permanent Representative of Mauritius.

Mr. Soborun (Mauritius): The journey from Rio to Bali in our quest for a cleaner environment and the preservation of planet Earth has taken us over a decade and a half thus far. Although slow in its progress, this quest has nonetheless been able to generate a consensus that climate change is real and that global warming is caused by human activities.

I should like to commend the President for convening this timely thematic debate on a subject of serious concern to us all. I should also like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts to secure top priority for the issue of climate change, which he has rightly described as the defining issue of our time. Indeed it is.

I encourage the President and the Secretary-General to remain continuously engaged with respect to the issue of climate change, together with other equally important issues confronting us, such as the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, financing for development and, of course, the reform of the United Nations, including Security Council reform. Those issues are not mutually exclusive.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report, which not only provides an overview of the activities of the United Nations in relation to climate change, but also sets the guidelines on what can be done to make United Nations participation even better. Undoubtedly, the United Nations remains the best-placed Organization to deal with the issue of climate change. However, it is important to stress that all United Nations strategies and activities on climate change — and other issues as well — should be coordinated in a coherent manner so as to deliver as one.

Last but not least, I associate myself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Cameroon on behalf of the African Group.

We are already late in tackling the problems and adverse effects of climate change. Time is running out, and it is imperative that we hammer out an agreement well before 2009 to move the process forward for a comprehensive post-Kyoto agreement. In that context, we should refrain from overloading the agenda of the Bali Action Plan, as rightly pointed out by some of the eminent panellists at the meeting of the working group held on Monday, 11 February 2008.

The Bali Action Plan has called for enhanced national and international action on mitigation of climate change; enhanced action on adaptation; enhanced action on technology development and transfer to support action on mitigation; and enhanced action on the provision of financial resources and investment to support action on mitigation, adaptation and technology cooperation. Furthermore, it has also called for urgent action on, inter alia, the immediate needs of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, especially the least developed countries and small island developing States.

I should therefore like to emphasize some of the challenges confronting the small island developing States with regard to climate change and global warming. Small island developing States face severe threats from sea-level rise and extreme weather conditions, increasing beach erosion, coral bleaching and sea surges caused by climate change. Those threats seriously undermine the tourism and fishing industries, which by and large constitute the main economic pillars of most small island developing States. We therefore support United Nations initiatives to assist developing countries and small island developing States in identifying and implementing national mitigation strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while promoting local sustainable development and cleaner economic growth.

We also reiterate our call for the setting up of a special fund for small island developing States to enable the development and implementation of adaptation measures in the same manner as the Least Developed Countries Fund under the Global Environment Facility. Funding should be based on vulnerability and the level of urgency for adaptation.

The initial sum of $300 million recently pledged to start the Adaptation Fund is a drop in the ocean if we consider the magnitude of the problems caused by the adverse effects of climate change. We are convinced that the international community can do much more, as it has the capabilities and resources to mobilize billions and trillions of dollars for the purpose, given that we now all agree that whatever we neglect to do today in addressing the challenges of climate change may cost us several times as much to remedy in the years ahead.

We welcome the recent initiative of the Government of Japan to establish a financial mechanism called the "Cool Earth Partnership" consisting of $10 billion in the aggregate over the next five years to assist developing countries that are making efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve economic growth in a compatible way, on the basis of policy consultations between Japan and those countries. We also welcome Japan's intention to set up a multilateral fund together with the United States and the United Kingdom, and we note its call for other donors to participate in the fund.

We also support the Government of India's commitment to focus on areas such as natural disaster preparedness, resilience, capacity-building, adaptation and mitigation with regard to small island developing States. We express our appreciation for India's committed project aid of $70 million to small island developing States, in addition to its $350 million in concessional loans and credit lines.

Small island developing States are deprived of mineral and natural resources such as iron ore, coal, gold, diamonds, copper and oil, to name but a few.

However, nature has been quite generous in providing them with an abundance of sunshine year in and year out. It goes without saying, therefore, that at a time when we are putting all our efforts into extracting carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, solar energy should be put to the best and most effective use. In that context, the transfer of technology and know-how to small island developing States in the use, application and development of solar energy — free of charge, or at subsidized and affordable rates — could be highly instrumental in helping them along the path towards cleaner energy and significantly reduced import bills for fossil fuels, as well as reduced dependability on fossil fuels. In that respect, under the umbrella of one of the United Nations agencies, the establishment of joint ventures between small island developing States and countries with advanced levels of technology and know-how in solar energy would be most welcome.

Coming back to the broader picture of climate change and global warming, and acknowledging that the planet is in peril, let me conclude with a more practical approach. Ask not what others can do; ask what I can contribute towards a cleaner environment. That "I" ranges from the most powerful to the least fortunate — from Governments, the most successful business corporations, industries and financial institutions to street vendors, civil societies, non-governmental organizations and many individuals and celebrities, such as Sir Richard Branson and actress Daryl Hannah, who were your chief guests at the luncheon on climate change hosted at the United Nations by President Srgjan Kerim on Monday, 11 February. We need to build bridges and partnerships with all the stakeholders. We all have a stake, based on the agreed principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in making the world a better, safer and cleaner place to live in, for us and for generations to come.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Carlisle Richardson, representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Richardson (Saint Kitts and Nevis): The Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis would like thank the President for convening this debate in the General Assembly on the theme "Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work".

Saint Kitts and Nevis associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the representative of Barbados on behalf of the Caribbean Community and the representative of Grenada on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

The Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis, being among the smallest independent nations, feels compelled to have its voice heard in this debate. There has been much talk and discussion on the issue of climate change. It is evident that some nations are willing to do much. The picture in relation to others is not yet clear.

Saint Kitts and Nevis joins the many who call for action — not just any action, but meaningful and focused action that will reduce the consequences of climate change. For us it is no longer a question of addressing the threats of climate change; the problem is beyond that. It is a matter of addressing its consequences. As the science in this area has yet to mature, it is the unknown that is waiting to haunt us.

Today, Saint Kitts and Nevis will describe a few of the ways in which climate change presently affects us. We are small. There is a rain forest. Our people live in coastal areas. The rest of the land is used for agriculture. It is not a lot of land. The destruction of our beaches and the damage to our rain forest and topography have begun. Sooner rather than later, rising sea levels could cause us to lose our beaches. Deforestation can soon be a real possibility.

Our rainfall is now unpredictable. We receive less rainfall than before but, when it comes, it is heavy. Rainfall and floods are constantly eroding our topsoil. We depend on the rain to irrigate our crops to feed our people. To irrigate otherwise is expensive. The present patterns are affecting our attempts to achieve food security. Prolonged periods of drought produce no crops. As a result, our bill for food imports continues to rise, using up much-needed foreign currency.

We continue to be affected by some, if not all, the hurricanes that visit the region yearly. Even when they do not hit us directly, we are affected by their outer bands, whether it be in the form of coastal erosion from the activity of the sea or land erosion from the resulting heavy rains, both of which cause us to continually lose our soil.

As a result of the decline in rainfall, our water resources are stretched to the limit. Desalination plants are now considered a necessary part of our planning for the future to meet water demands. It is an expensive way forward, but we have no choice.

Unfortunately, since tourism is our main engine of growth, the degradation of our natural assets will eventually make us unattractive to tourists. That in turn will have a negative impact on the many jobs that the tourism sector has produced for our economy.

My country agreed to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. That was our way of saying that we are on board with the rest of the international community in setting greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for the world. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the only way forward if we are to end the overall warming of the planet brought on by human activity.

The significance of the measures taken to protect and preserve our planet should be a concern of all nations — developing nations as well as those that are developed. To ignore the roles that we have to play in the process would have implications for us all. None of us is too large or too well placed geographically to consider ourselves safe from the ravages associated with unmitigated climate change; the historical data attest to that. Therefore, it is necessary and also wise to conclude that we are all in this together and must join in the efforts to protect our planet — which we hold in trust for the generations to come — and to ensure our own survival.

Saint Kitts and Nevis are among those countries contributing least to global warming. In fact, when one applies the principle of de minimis, one concludes that we contribute nothing to global warming. Yet, we are also among those who are beginning to suffer dearly as things grow worse.

No matter what the military or diplomatic strength of the victim nation-States may be, there is a moral imperative that the emitters and polluters join in partnership to find a solution. The industrialized countries have created the problem. There is very little that the rest of us can do on our own. The partnership of the industrialized world is necessary for a solution.

There can be no doubt as to the need for financial flows from the developed to the developing world to address the issues of mitigation and adaptation. We do not believe that everything must stand still until the negotiations end; there is much that we can do and much that can be done in the interim.

We are willing to contribute to the solution in our own small way, through the use of alternative sources of energy. In that regard, in our Federation there is evidence of viable commercial sources of geothermal energy. We ourselves are working to gain access to those sources, but there is still a need for financial and technical assistance from the developed world if we are to succeed in bringing them into production.

Therefore, in our response to this multifaceted challenge, we must be nations that are united as partners in the area of climate change. I therefore invite the fullest positive participation of all Members as nations united in efforts to address the issues associated with climate change. We ask that all nations be proactive in the implementation of strategies and solutions to mitigate the impending disaster and misfortune for us all. As a small island State, we are anxious to help ensure that no island is left behind.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Peter Maurer, Permanent Representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland very much welcomes the holding of this thematic debate, and we thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/62/644). That document is a very good source of information and of proposals aimed at better coordination of the activities of United Nations agencies to support negotiations and the implementation of measures. Still to be resolved is the important issue of carrying out the process initiated by the Secretary-General to ensure that United Nations agencies address climate change issues in a more effective and consistent manner.

We urge that the priorities related to climate protection in the areas of emissions reduction and adaptation be integrated into the strategies of United Nations agencies. Thus, we support the approach taken by the Secretary-General: identifying sectoral objectives and making concrete proposals aimed at the attainment of each of them. Roles must still be assigned to the relevant agencies to ensure the attainment of those objectives.

The strategies of United Nations agencies must integrate, develop and meet the needs and priorities identified by the two forums responsible for addressing global climate change within the United Nations system: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol. As the Secretary-General indicated in his report, the scientific issues of observation, follow-up and research with regard to the climate system and the assessment of knowledge in that area must also be priorities for the specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

However, many sectoral objectives identified in the Secretary-General's report are not only climatic objectives, but sources of broader interest in the area of development. In that connection, we should like issues related to environmental protection to be considered and to contribute to sustainable development. More generally, we believe that adequate resources must be made available to United Nations agencies in order to support national and international processes regarding climate change.

In the immediate future, we should like the United Nations system to effectively meet the requirements of the Bali Action Plan with regard to emissions reduction, adaptation, technology transfer and the mobilization of sufficient financial resources. The Plan sets out objectives for each of those areas, and United Nations agencies can contribute and respond to them.

We recall that the Bali Action Plan identifies disaster risk prevention as an essential element in climate change adaptation strategies. Thus, we urge the United Nations system to systematically integrate risk prevention programmes into climate change adaptation programmes, particularly in national development plans. In that context, we welcome the World Bank's recent innovative initiatives in the field of disaster reduction.

Finally, we underline the importance of the Third World Climate Conference, to be held in Geneva in early September 2009. The Conference was decided upon at the Fifteenth World Meteorological Congress and should be supported by all relevant United Nations agencies. The Conference will include a high-level segment during which important recommendations will be made for the fight against climate change, particularly in the area of adaptation.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Rodrigo Riofrío, representative of Ecuador.

Mr. Riofrío (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me at the outset to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. My delegation also congratulates the President of the General Assembly on the convening of this important debate on climate change, which is a priority issue for Ecuador.

Our country emphasizes the importance of the establishment of the Road Map as a result of the Bali Conference. The Road Map will enable the international community to achieve the necessary agreements to address the effects of climate change by establishing targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and to implement new mitigation and adaptation measures.

The historical responsibility of developed countries in the area of climate change is of great concern to us, given that ever more intense climatic events produce disastrous consequences, especially for developing countries. We therefore call on developed countries to assume their historical commitment and put in place measures that can help developing countries to mitigate the resulting effects.

Ecuador is a marginal country as regards emissions, producing less than 1 per cent of the world's total. However, in recent years our country has suffered from severe natural disasters resulting from climate change. As a result, at this very moment, various areas of our country — especially along our coast — are under a state of emergency following the serious flooding that has taken place as a result of torrential rains. These rains were due to the phenomenon known as La Niña, and have had an unprecedented impact and produced thousands of victims.

Climate change affects us all. It knows no boundaries and has an impact on both developed and developing countries. Ecuador, which agrees with the principle of shared responsibility, therefore proposed an initiative to the international community several months ago that would involve leaving the crude oil contained in the Ishpingo Tambococha Tiputini (ITT) oil fields of Ecuador's Yasuní National Park in the ground. By exploiting the ITT-Yasuní fields Ecuador could produce more than 100,000 barrels of crude oil per day, with a value of $720 million annually. Production would continue for approximately 13 years, during which 107,000 barrels on average would be produced daily.

The proposal we have made would obligate Ecuador not to exploit the almost 920 million barrels of oil in the highly biodiverse Yasuní ecological region. In return for that economic sacrifice, our country would ask the international community to assume co-responsibility in this initiative by establishing the ITT-Yasuní trust fund and contributing $5 per non-extracted barrel. To that end, a technical secretariat has already been established to implement the project. The total amount that the international community would have to contribute to the compensation fund would be approximately $4.6 billion, which we would use to carry out our national development plan. That plan includes provisions for diversifying our energy supply, developing our capacities and investment in ecotourism and implementing a comprehensive agenda covering the areas of health, education and environmental restoration.

This is an initiative by a small country, whose economic resources depend upon exploiting oil resources. However, because we are aware of the devastating effects of climate change, we are willing to make the necessary efforts to mitigate that phenomenon, even if it means forgoing a significant amount of revenue. Ecuador therefore once again calls on the international community to support our initiative to leave the ITT-Yasuní oil in the ground as an innovative, creative and humane proposal to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Hugo Siles Alvarado, Permanent Representative of Bolivia.

Mr. Siles Alvarado (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to congratulate the presidency on the time and effort it is devoting to addressing such an important issue as that of climate change.

The Mission of Bolivia associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77.

I do not want to repeat all the arguments and facts that have been set out in a very detailed and exhaustive manner by the representatives who have spoken before me. Nevertheless, I should like to refer to some issues of importance to the Bolivian Mission.

It seems that, in our determination to promptly address the potential disastrous consequences looming on the horizon as a result of climate change, we are forgetting the fundamental causes that led to the current situation. As a result, we are dealing only with short-term problems and forgetting those that may arise in the medium and long terms. We should remember that climate change is the result of a long process of environmental pollution, which began, as is well known, in the 1850s with the industrial use of the steam engine and the internal combustion engine. The accelerated process of industrialization was accompanied by a huge demand for natural resources and energy. In many cases, this led to armed conflicts that continue to this day and are preventing humankind from living together in peace.

Industrialization, although it made unquestionable contributions to the improvement of the living conditions and quality of life of millions of human beings, was unfortunately accompanied by very detrimental consequences for the preservation of the human race, of nature and of the planet in general. Let us hope that finding a solution to the problems of climate change does not take as long as environmental pollution took to create climate change. Because if it does, we shall need something like 150 years to bring climate change under control.

Industrial overproduction in consumer societies and their irrational and insatiable demand for sources of energy have led to the unbridled overexploitation of non-renewable resources, the pollution of rivers, seas, air and land and the ongoing depredation of natural forests. The excess demand for energy is today forcing some countries to convert millions of hectares of arable land, which could be used to grow food crops to alleviate the hunger of millions of human beings, to the production of corn, sugar cane and other crops for biofuels, which are beginning to be used in millions of cars that generally do not fulfil an essential need. Cities such as London and New York, however, are beginning to search for disincentives to curb the lavish use of cars.

We sometimes wonder what poses the greater threat to the survival of the human race; climate change or the insensitivity of those who have everything. Climate change, leading to climate disasters today, is actually the result of excessive demand and the waste of energy and consumer goods in developed countries.

Countries like Bolivia, which have never benefited to any significant amount from scientific and technological development and which have never contributed significantly to environmental degradation, have to pay the consequences of climate change. Paradoxically, countries which have caused the greatest amount to the grim picture facing our planet are those who decide that now we all have a shared responsibility to confront the challenges of adapting to and mitigating climate change.

At this point in time, Bolivia is going through a very difficult period as a result of the devastating rains and floods that threaten the personal safety, security and health of thousands of people. All of this is the consequence of the sudden cold or warm air masses that have in recent years fundamentally affected the South American continent.

Last year, following the floods in the city of Trinidad in Bolivia and with the help of our Venezuelan brothers and sisters, we built a dike in order to prevent even more floods. Building the dike on the basis of pre-flooding water levels seems not to have proven adequate: water levels have now risen above that containment wall. This tells us that adaptation measures may be insufficient and that it is not possible to predict the actual scope of climatic changes.

More economically developed countries, which are responsible for the ecological changes that we are now experiencing, have put forth two strategies to slow down ecological and climatic collapse: adaptation and mitigation. In both cases, less developed countries lack the technology necessary to implement these policies of adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. This technology must be made immediately available to all countries and at no cost for all of the least developed countries (LDCs): this is the least that countries which have contributed most to environmental degradation over the last 150 years can do to help us to confront the challenges of adaptation and mitigation. Furthermore, policies of adaptation and mitigation are only palliative measures. They cannot guarantee the effective control of climate change, as long as developed countries continue to maintain and increase their energy consumption.

The future of the LDCs over the next 50 years is very uncertain in terms of energy resources. The voracious demand for natural resources seems to have ensured the exhaustion of those resources. The new types of energy production that are being developed today carry with them costs that put them beyond the reach of the poorest and least developed among us.

The point, therefore, is to decrease the per capita energy demand in all countries of the world and especially in those countries whose energy consumption is excessive. The United Nations has the obligation to propose educational policies that will change consumption habits, slow down deforestation of natural forests and eliminate pollution in rivers and seas. All of us must commit ourselves to working to save our planet from the voracious appetites of the insatiable.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Christian Wenaweser, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We value this opportunity to offer our view on climate change once again and are grateful for the high-quality and stimulating discussions of the day before yesterday in the framework of the panels organized by you, Mr. President.

Clearly, climate change is an exemplary challenge for global cooperation, since the need for multilateral action can hardly be more obvious. It therefore constitutes a unique challenge to the United Nations system.

The leadership that the Secretary-General has shown on this topic ever since he took office is thus crucial. Tremendous momentum has been created on the issue of climate change in recent months and the Bali Road Map on climate change was the first step in translating this momentum into concrete action. More must follow, of course.

In tackling climate change, we must realize that this is not merely an environmental issue, but predominantly one of sustainable development. Since climate change can also exacerbate existing security threats, it also has a strong security dimension and thus contains elements of the priorities of United Nations work in general. It is also highly relevant for another priority topic that we will address later this year, namely, our ongoing work on the Millennium Development Goals.

The report of the Secretary-General before us today illustrates the impressive range of activities related to climate change in which different players within the United Nations system are already engaged. It also shows that the response to the challenge of international environmental governance that is under discussion can make an important contribution to targeting our response to climate change. The key areas for action of mitigation, adaptation, technology and financing, as well as deforestation, must be carried out in a manner based on an inclusive and coherent approach, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General.

We therefore support the statement made by the two Chairpeople in charge of the institutional framework. We also look forward to the continued leadership of the Secretary-General in shaping a coordinated United Nations approach, in particular the work under way with the Chief Executives Boards.

Financing and technology rightfully occupy a central place in the framework we have agreed in Bali. Clearly, the resource side is one aspect where much thinking is yet to be done, and we hope for creative proposals on mechanisms for financing. At the same time, we must not be led to believe that there is a technological answer to the complex challenge that climate change poses.

An indispensable element of our success is sustained political will, as well as the promotion of a global consciousness of the magnitude of the problem we are facing. In this respect, partnerships between all the stakeholders can have a strong catalytic effect.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Martín García Moritán, representative of Argentina.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, let me begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for convening this singular event, as well as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the commitment he has shown in bringing a multilateral focus to bear on the scourge of climate change. The Argentine Republic strongly emphasizes the importance of negotiations within the relevant major forums and reaffirms the key role of the United Nations system in relation to this topic.

We believe that the natural arena for negotiations on this issue is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, without minimizing the possible contributions of efforts made outside the climate change system. We are, therefore, not convinced as to the benefits of a possible proliferation of forums for efforts to address the issue. If it is dealt with outside the framework of the Convention, that could have negative implications for ensuring the active participation of developing countries in the discussions.

We consider the report of the Secretary-General on this issue (A/62/644) to be extremely important, and we believe that the United Nations system should assist in the two-year-long negotiation process set out in the Bali Action Plan, with a view to reaching an agreement that will improve the multilateral regime dealing with climate change, without compromising the legitimate right of non-annex I parties under the Kyoto Protocol to sustainable development.

An improved international response requires that all industrialized countries adopt stricter commitments than those set out in the Kyoto Protocol. To that end, we must also find ways to promote the participation of developing countries, including by establishing criteria that will make it possible to differentiate between them, taking account of each country's national circumstances and capacities.

The countries not included in annex I of the Protocol could adopt sustainable development policies and measures contributing to mitigation and adaptation. However, there are difficulties with implementation, which are due in part to a lack of sufficient resources. Activities by developing countries should be appropriately encouraged through international cooperation in the areas of investigation, observation, technology transfer and financing.

Some entities of the United Nations system are already assisting in the climate change regime in these areas, but they should be encouraged to focus their efforts on developing countries. Improving multilateral cooperation is essential in carrying out mitigation and adaptation efforts. Under the Convention, developed countries are obligated to help developing countries to meet their commitments, through financial resources, capacity-building and technology transfer. The time has come to honour that commitment.

As former President Néstor Kirchner stated in this Hall at the 2007 High-level Event on Climate Change:

> "Everyone recognizes that the developing countries have contributed the least to the creation of this imbalance known as climate change, one of whose causes has been identified as the impact of human activity. On the contrary, it is the developed countries that have received a virtual environmental subsidy from our countries for a long time — a subsidy that has enabled

> them to enjoy the high consumption levels that have caused this situation.
>
> "That has clearly caused the world and the developing countries to become the environmental creditors of the developed countries. This situation has created a moral and environmental debt that must be duly repaid to eliminate the inequities caused by the adverse effects of climate change. For too long, adaptation to climate change has been the unfulfilled promise of the international regime created for that purpose."

The activities of the United Nations system to promote the implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures and the transfer of financial and technological resources could be strengthened if the parties to the climate change system reach agreement in the primary forum and in negotiations to help it move forward. Otherwise, our efforts could be fragmented. Far from promoting an effective response to the challenge, that would compromise the coherence of the regime.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol are fully valid areas for immediate national action and international debate. With all our political will, we must focus on meeting the obligations already established and must reject any initiative aimed at undermining those forums, those goals and our future.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Jean-Marie Ehouzou, Permanent Representative of Benin.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My delegation expresses its great appreciation to Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly, for his initiative to invite eminent personalities to enliven our panel discussions on mobilizing the international community to respond to the terrible effects of climate change.

Benin associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the Group of African States and by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Climate change is no longer in the realm of the merely imaginary or possible; it is already a tangible reality affecting the basic necessities of life for peoples throughout the world. It is shown in the increased frequency of natural disasters, which are causing enormous damage in the countries affected. Climate change is jeopardizing the very existence of many coastal and island States and could lead to a dwindling of available living space, by considerably reducing the area of habitable land and making environmental conditions more difficult for life and human activity. In fact, we are already facing coastal erosion and flooding in many regions of the world as a result of sea-level rise, in addition to falling groundwater tables, the drying up of watercourses and lakes, the salinization of rivers and many other phenomena, which are complicating access to natural resources essential for the survival of humanity.

The fruitful panel discussions that we have had on this issue have certainly benefited the quest for ideal and innovative solutions to the challenges confronting humanity in all fields of activity. Such solutions must be collective and based on international solidarity and the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities. That is the only way to ensure not only that we can make the necessary behaviour and lifestyle changes, but also, and in particular, that we can limit the damage through mitigation and adaptation efforts. To that end, we must swiftly mobilize the financial resources required to ensure the transfer of appropriate technologies as well as capacity-building.

The President took the Chair.

In addition to systematic measures set out within the framework of conventions on the environment aimed at addressing the human factors contributing to climate change, our societies must make sweeping changes to stave off the threat of major climate shocks The most recent report of the United Nations Environment Programme, which is devoted to the fight against climate change, is based on, inter alia, the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). It highlights the mostly positive cost-ratio advantage of proactive action as compared with the cost of natural disasters caused by climate change.

The technological progress of recent years has made it possible to introduce and promote the use of new and renewable sources of energy in order to reduce the constantly increasing pressures on finite natural resources. For example, giving a solar oven to a poor family in my country would contribute to the fight against desertification by considerably reducing the use of firewood, and thus would assist in the fight against deforestation. That is a proven fact. Solar panels are another alternative to providing abundant energy, especially in Africa, where there is sunshine 365 days a year. Unfortunately, solar panels are not within the reach of our peoples, who are too poor to buy them. The time has come to end market speculation in this type of product, and to make them accessible to the poorest segments of populations in need.

We have at our disposal both the financial and technological resources necessary to adapt to climate change. What is needed is more political will and vision to be able to bequeath a liveable world to future generations. Any mitigation and adaptation strategy must necessarily incorporate the element of sustainable development, which includes eradicating poverty and enabling individuals to lead lives that are healthy, decent and respectful of the normal order of things. We should maximize existing synergies in order to activate all potential actors of change, by reorienting existing frameworks for traditional cooperation.

Along the same lines, we should also maximize the benefits that could be derived from the convergence and complementarity of international conventions on global environmental governance. Also in that framework, the international community, especially donors, must understand that the successful implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification requires financial resources at the same level as other conventions concluded during the Rio period.

Benin calls for the synergetic implementation of the programmes of action to combat the negative effects of climate change — as regards both policy and, above all, resources. In the same vein, the resources allocated to the Adaptation Fund to combat climate change — which must be increased — should also be utilized to finance projects to combat degradation of the land and to support a massive reforestation and soil-protection programme. Those efforts will contribute to improving both the health of the world's environment and that of its inhabitants by generating revenue. The Convention to Combat Desertification should be the basis for efforts to adapt to climate change and mitigate its effects, as well as to strengthen the resiliency of countries in which soil degradation is a critical problem.

In that connection, the Commission on Sustainable Development should further dedicate itself to issues related to climate change. There is room for improving the existing limited capacities in monitoring and analysing phenomena associated with climate change in Africa. There is also a need to establish a global databank that can provide statistics and scientific information of equal accuracy for all the world's regions, so as to ensure that we have at our disposal effective surveillance that can bolster our forecasting capability. Above all, the United Nations should help low-income developing countries to incorporate the climate change situation into their national investment strategies, so as to make those strategies more rational in the light of climate change.

With regard to the mobilization of resources, the United Nations could, in addition to fulfilling the commitments already undertaken, consider the possibility of a solidarity levy on resources generated by activities involving production factors that have been declared to be the common patrimony of humankind — such as the seabed and historic sites — in order to provide resources for the Adaptation Fund. The United Nations is in the best position to find innovative formulas for the mobilization of additional resources to combat climate change. We should carefully consider the various proposals to which I have referred.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Observer of the Holy See, Archbishop Celestino Migliore.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): The ongoing debate on climate change has helped put into focus the inescapable responsibility of one and all to care for the environment, thereby building consensus around the common objective of promoting a healthy environment for present and future generations.

The recent United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali has shown that through increased concern for our neighbour, in particular those most vulnerable to climatic change, we are better equipped to adopt strategies and policies that balance the needs of humankind with the urgent need for a more responsible stewardship.

The Holy See assures the General Assembly of its collaboration in achieving the objectives set in Bali. To that end, the personal commitment and numerous public appeals of Pope Benedict XVI have generated awareness campaigns for a renewed sense of respect for, and the need to safeguard, God's creation.

Individuals and communities have started to change their lifestyles, aware that personal and collective behaviour impacts the climate and the overall health of the environment. While such lifestyle changes at times may seem irrelevant, every small initiative to reduce or offset one's carbon footprint, be it the avoidance of the unnecessary use of transport or the daily effort to reduce energy consumption, contributes to mitigating environmental decay and concretely shows commitment to environmental care.

On a more practical side, the Holy See has already taken certain measures to reduce and offset the carbon emission of the Vatican City State, such as the use of solar panels and the planting of trees. Through its involvement in a reforestation project in Hungary, it will provide environmental benefits to the host country, assist in the recovery of an environmentally degraded tract of land and provide local jobs.

The interrelated issues of environmental preservation, economic development and climate change can have competing demands on our priorities and concerns. It is incumbent upon every individual and nation to seriously assume one's share of the responsibility to find and implement the most balanced approach possible to this challenge. Sustainable development provides the key to a strategy that harmoniously takes into account the demands of environmental preservation, climate change, economic development and basic human needs.

The use of clean technologies is an important component of sustainable development. To help industrializing countries avoid the errors that others committed in the past, highly industrialized countries should share with the former their more advanced and cleaner technologies. The pooling of resources makes initiatives of mitigation and adaptation economically accessible to most, thereby assisting those less equipped to pursue development while safeguarding the environment. Moreover, markets must be encouraged to patronize green economics, and not to sustain demand for goods whose very production causes environmental degradation. Consumers must be aware that their consumption patterns have a direct impact on the health of the environment.

Indeed, the challenge of climate change is at once individual, local, national and global. Accordingly, it urges a multilevel coordinated response, with mitigation and adaptation programmes simultaneously being individual, local, national and global in their vision and scope. My delegation therefore commends the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for providing a global framework for concerted international action to mitigate climate change and to adapt to its impacts. The almost universal membership in the Convention will not fail to facilitate the launching of national strategies — starting with those most vulnerable, such as small island States and coastal, low-lying populated areas — and will promote a more equitable pooling of resources and technology to help vulnerable countries with lesser resources to better understand and assess the risks they face.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2, of 19 October 1994, I now call on Mr. Raymond Forde, of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Forde (International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) congratulates you, Mr. President, on your decision to convene this thematic debate on climate change. For us, the issue of partnerships is particularly appropriate because of its vital relevance to the fulfilment of commitments in the Hyogo Framework and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) contexts.

This same theme was addressed at the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, held in late November 2007 in Geneva. That conference brought together all the world's Governments and their partner Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and resulted in the adoption by consensus of a declaration entitled "Together for Humanity". One of the four major challenges identified in the declaration is the humanitarian consequences of environmental degradation and climate change, with an emphasis on adaptation.

The debate at the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference was driven by exactly the same realizations as those which underpin the discussions here. The first is that there can be no argument about the impact today of climate change and global warming on tens — no, hundreds — of millions of people all over the world.

We are an organization composed of 186 National Societies functioning as auxiliaries to the public authorities in every country. Our "Together for Humanity" declaration envisages each Government meeting with its National Society to establish what they can do together to combat the challenge of climate change. Our Societies are committed to their part of this initiative, and some have already engaged their Governments on defining roles and responsibilities. We urge all Governments to take up the opportunity that our Geneva consensus provides to make a real difference, especially in fields such as adaptation.

In anticipation of that, we worked with the Netherlands Red Cross Society to establish the Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Centre on Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness in The Hague in 2002. Since then, we have utilized its expertise and resources to contribute to a large number of international meetings and events all over the world and have used that experience to build national actions on humanitarian consequences in selected countries.

We have also established partnerships between the IFRC and global and regional organizations to address disaster risk reduction. One such organization, in my own region, is the Association of Caribbean States. But the diversity of our interest is also illustrated by our intention to work more closely with the Sustainable Development Working Group of the Arctic Council. We also pay tribute to the work of the Alliance of Small Island States for the priority its members are undertaking to give climate change and its consequences the priority it deserves.

We in the Red Cross and Red Crescent are profoundly committed to ensuring that all Governments fully appreciate the humanitarian consequences of climate change. To address this, and in fulfilment of the consensus achieved at the November 2007 International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, we will use all means at our disposal to ensure that climate change is fully integrated into disaster risk reduction and disaster management policies and plans at the national level. We will continue giving the highest priority to those with the greatest needs, especially in the small island developing States, land-locked countries and least developed countries.

One of our key messages that we delivered in Bali and will be delivering again in Poznan and in Copenhagen is that adaptation to climate change must be prioritized in all countries and in all programmes. Despite the support the concept always receives, it has yet to become truly embedded.

I repeat this message today: adaptation must receive its own funding support. It must not be seen as a competitor for development funds. It requires its own resources, and unless serious commitments to new funds are made, we will have to face the prospect of an annual cost to the planet of one trillion dollars by the year 2040 — the figure published by the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative in 2006.

I hold this topic of climate change most dear to my heart. I am from a small island developing State, Barbados, in the Caribbean archipelago and am naturally worried that if various aspects such as rising sea levels are not fully addressed, my own country — to which other nations refer to as a paradise — might not exist as I now know it in 2050.

I implore the General Assembly to fully endorse the conclusions of this conference and commit to concerted action.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/2, of 13 October 1980, I now call on Ms. Diane Jumet, of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization.

Ms. Jumet (Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization): Although climate change has come to the forefront of global attention over the past few years, we should note that the United Nations has been addressing this issue since 1986. More recently, however, the growing competition among populations for natural resources, the desires and indeed the rights of increasing numbers of people to have access to the benefits already enjoyed by the most developed world, and the availability of information about the state of the environment in all parts of the planet have propelled the climate change issue to the top of the agenda.

There is a general acceptance by most Member States, if not all of them, that climate change is no longer a controversial issue. There is no impasse. All States, by now, are cognizant of the threat not only to the Earth's ecosystems but also to the quality of life of all humankind. Therefore, we must avoid setting up a false dichotomy between those States that have the moral will to address this issue and those that wish to develop at any cost. We understand that we must either work to meet this challenge together or fail separately.

The dire predictions and pessimism about our capability to deal with climate change should be contrasted with some of the commendable steps that have been taken by Member States and those in the private sector. For example, the comprehensive energy policy recently adopted by the European Commission demonstrates a willingness to set targets and promote innovative solutions, even if policies must be modified as more is learned about their actual effectiveness. In addition, many corporations are discovering that becoming environmentally friendly is not only beneficial for the planet but also cost-effective and is positively received by consumers.

The policy of reducing consumption is an important and necessary measure, given that technological advances have not kept up with the incremental growth in exploitation of the resources of the planet. However, investment in research and development may well lead to technologies that will allow more people to have more benefit, whereas reduction measures leave an ever-greater number of people to divide up an ever-diminishing share of resources. Therefore, we should increase our commitment to expanding and refining technology that can help us to use what resources we have in the most efficient way possible.

The sharing and transfer of technology is a moral imperative and a laudable goal. At the same time, we cannot share what does not yet exist. For example, there is an urgent need for more efficient and safe renewable energy sources and for clean coal-burning technologies. There is also a dire need for an improved internal combustion engine that will meet transport requirements while minimizing harmful emissions. The recent introduction of a very low-cost automobile designed for first-time owners in one of our member States has raised outcries among some who fear that its mass production will add dangerously to the level of greenhouse gases. The implication is that the sum total of allowable pollution has been reached and no new members may be added to the club.

In the absence of acceptable technologies, we cannot expect that developing States are morally bound to put development on hold until science catches up with present-day needs. Reduction must be shared by all, but with regard to the proportion of the Earth's resources being exploited by each. In addition, technology development and transfer must be a priority and the special responsibility of those who have the capacity to undertake it.

The United Nations, as the world's most representative intergovernmental forum, can make its most effective contribution to the debate on climate change by identifying areas of agreement among Member States and promoting cooperation and information-sharing among the parties. The goals that are set must be attainable, for setting the bar too high may become a reason for procrastination or failure.

The Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization believes that, as a starting point, Member States, working through the United Nations system, can address climate change by working on the implementation of existing treaties. States have already agreed on rules with respect to adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate disruption. However, there has been too little follow-through in the enactment of national and local legislation.

An example of the effectiveness of existing agreements can be found in the cooperation and adherence to obligations by the parties to Ramsar Convention. The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer is another example of successful partnership and the benefits of technology-sharing.

Member States can also address climate change by promoting the dissemination and sharing of information. The Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters guarantees the rights of citizens to information from public authorities and encourages democratic engagement in environmental decisions.

All those examples indicate that attention and adherence to existing agreements can do much to move the process forward.

Finally, AALCO would like to note that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the relevant body for dealing with the climate change issue.

The President: In accordance with resolution 57/32, of 19 November 2002, I now call on Mrs. Anda Filip, Permanent Observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mrs. Filip (Inter-Parliamentary Union): The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) welcomes the opportunity to address this thematic debate today.

For several years now, IPU has concerned itself with the environment. During recent Assemblies it has debated climate change, energy security, environmental degradation, natural disasters and the protection of biodiversity. Its members have negotiated and adopted resolutions that in many cases have served to mobilize parliamentary action on the respective issues.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the one hundred and sixteenth IPU Assembly, which was held in Bali in April last year, that when it comes to climate change, the cost of inaction far outweighs the cost of action. Parliaments have a contribution to make in ensuring that the necessary resources are made available, and their legislative role is particularly important, since in their hands lies considerable power to forge the laws, guidelines, frameworks and incentives that will allow business, industry and other actors to play their part in achieving the deep emissions cuts that are needed.

The IPU Assembly in Bali closed with the adoption of a declaration on climate change. The declaration called on parliaments to reinforce climate change policy and legislation with a view to achieving the ultimate objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. Parliamentarians pledged to raise the issue of climate change in their respective parliaments and to engage with Government ministers on preparations for the Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention held in Bali last December — with results that we can only welcome.

Different examples may be quoted of reactions within parliaments in follow-up to the Bali parliamentary declaration. The parliament of Chile has started to look at ways to make the national budget more environment-friendly. The German Bundestag committee on the environment, nature conservation and nuclear safety recently debated several motions on proposed climate protection measures introduced by parliamentary groups. The Bundestag also sets an example for climate protection and energy efficiency in the operation of its own buildings. In Israel, the Knesset committee for internal affairs and the environment is currently preparing the second and third readings of a clean air bill. At a recent session the Japanese Diet enacted a law relating to the promotion of Government contracts that pay due consideration to environmental concerns, assessing the environmental load of each project rather than simply looking at price competitiveness. In the United Kingdom, the parliamentary joint committee on the draft climate change bill, which aims to reduce that country's net carbon account by at least 60 per cent from the 1990 baseline by the year 2050, expressed its concerns recently about the legal enforceability of targets and budgets and proposed a system of annual milestones and a compliance mechanism to create a strong legal framework. In Belarus, the Parliament is currently debating two bills designed to mitigate climate change, one to amend the environmental protection law on compensation for environmental damage and the other concerning a draft code on Earth resources. I could quote many other examples.

Parliaments alone will not save the world from its own extinction by greenhouse gases. That will be done by the right partnerships being forged between Governments, civil society and the private sector, putting the interests of the general public before more narrow concerns. What parliaments can do, however, as the Secretary-General has suggested, is to lay the legal foundations that are necessary for such partnerships to really work in practice. They can also play a useful role in explaining to the public why radical action is in their best interests. To do that as effectively as possible, IPU has identified three main areas of focus that constitute the pillars of the global parliamentary campaign on climate change.

Under the heading of leadership, parliaments are called upon to promote a more robust national commitment to global cooperation in climate observation and research. They can engage national stakeholders, civil society and local industry in discussion of national action plans. They can initiate work to estimate adaptation needs and to include them in social, economic and development planning. They can also monitor the publication of regular Government green accounting reports and make sure that parliaments are places in which innovative financial mechanisms and new technologies are amply discussed.

Under the heading of knowledge and its dissemination, parliaments can better foster understanding within communities of the threat of climate change and the action needed to avert dangerous human interference in the climate system. They can also draw on their countries' experts from the most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to promote a better understanding at all levels of society of the climate change issue; disseminate a better understanding of the socially optimum level of mitigation; and monitor local news for misinformation about climate change and respond publicly where that is needed.

Under the third heading — technology transfer and capacity-building — parliaments can strengthen national support for the transfer of greenhouse-friendly technologies to developing counties and support capacity-building for adaptation to natural climate variables and humankind-induced climate change in developing countries.

In the international arena, the IPU campaign will seek to compile good practices, pin-pointing case studies where legislators have been instrumental in plans and projects that have proved their worth. Members of parliament will meet regularly to talk with the scientific community, so as to forge a shared understanding of what is practical and workable in societies, especially poor ones. Finally, they will channel those findings into the international arena in order to better inform international organizations of how progress can be made and how win-win solutions can take real shape.

The President: In accordance with resolution 47/4, of 16 October 1992, I now give the floor to Mrs. Anke Strauss of the International Organization for Migration.

Mrs. Krauss (International Organization for Migration): The International Organization for Migration (IOM) appreciates the opportunity to participate in this thematic debate on climate change to underline the issues of climate change, environmental degradation and migration.

As we have heard throughout this debate, discussion of the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on human mobility is not entirely new. As early as 1990, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had noted that

> "the greatest single impact of climate change could be on human migration — with millions of people displaced by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and agricultural disruption".

Yet, until recently, comparatively little attention has been paid to the long-term migration consequences of predictable environmental forces. Therefore, it is an important and timely development that the discussion on climate change, including environmental degradation and its nexus with migration, has been revitalized and stimulated by the IPCC reports and the debates held here at the United Nations.

Both gradual climate change and great natural disasters will put at risk the inhabitants — particularly indigenous peoples — of coastal regions, low-lying islands and areas susceptible to drought, and may force them to move to safer areas. While no consensus exists thus far as to whether or not migration can be considered as a way of adaptation or as a failure of adaptation strategies, it is indeed often a survival mechanism for those affected. The implications of the climate change and migration nexus for human vulnerability, including its potential for sparking new, and reigniting old, conflicts, have yet to receive sufficient attention, both from policy makers and researchers.

IOM is currently promoting policy dialogue and research on that nexus. First, to establish effective policy approaches for managing the migratory causes and consequences of global environmental change, Governments and other stakeholders need to address a number of broad policy challenges, namely, by entering into a multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary dialogue and cooperation, commencing early planning to address migratory consequences and the causes of environmental change, leveraging the development potential of migration as an adaptation strategy, and improving capacity-building and awareness-raising.

To advance that multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary dialogue on policies and related issues, and in the context of the Greek chairmanship of the Human Security Network, IOM and the Government of Greece are organizing a conference, to be held next week in Geneva, to address the nexus of climate change and human security and its impact on vulnerable groups.

Secondly, research is another urgent priority. To advance this debate among researchers, the United Nations University, IOM and the Munich Reinsurance company are organizing an expert group meeting among multidisciplinary researchers on the theme "Towards a global agenda for research on migration and the environment", in order to define the research agenda on environmental migration. The experts aim at three primary goals, namely, assessing the existing knowledge base on environmental migration, promoting a new agenda of policy-oriented research on migration and the environment, and identifying key questions, research themes and innovative research methods needed for more accurate data collection and cross-cutting approaches to migration and the environment.

Recognizing that policy, research and operational activities need to be consistent in order to ensure the necessary coherence at all levels, IOM, along with humanitarian partners from the United Nations system and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, is addressing the operational aspects of supporting environmentally displaced persons.

As the Secretary-General stated in his opening remarks at the September event,

> "We know enough to act; if we do not act now, the impact of climate change will be devastating; and we have affordable measures and technologies to begin addressing the problem right now. What we do not have is time."

As we speak, environmentally induced migration resulting from both climate processes and climate events is already uprooting communities and transforming cultures at an alarming rate.

The President: In accordance with resolution 54/195, of 17 December 1999, I now give the floor to Mr. Narinder Kakar, Permanent Observer of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

Mr. Kakar (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources): The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) applauds your initiative, Mr. President, to convene this thematic debate on climate change, which is very timely given the urgency of dealing with the issue. The debate also provides an opportunity to discuss ways to address climate change collectively.

It is important to realize that, although climate change will affect all, it is the poor and vulnerable who will be affected most severely. The international community's actions must therefore be rooted in sustainable development and equity, while recognizing the vulnerability of poor people, the need for economic growth and poverty alleviation, and a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, with its economic, social and environmental pillars. IUCN's own work on climate change focuses on links between climate change, equity and biodiversity, and the opportunities and challenges that those links present for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

We are pleased that the need for collaboration between Member States, the private sector and civil society in efforts to address the challenges posed by climate change is being realized. IUCN fully supports efforts to develop such partnerships in order to respond to the key areas described in the Bali Action Plan.

IUCN works towards preventing biodiversity loss in support of human well-being. In that regard, we wish to highlight the value of biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides in reducing the impacts of climate change. Activities aimed at increasing adaptation to climate change and resilience will secure livelihoods and reduce vulnerability to disaster. We therefore hope that biodiversity-related action towards climate change adaptation will be fully integrated into the development programmes of United Nations agencies.

In that context, partnerships at the local level are essential in order to ensure adaptation to climate change. IUCN highlights the crucial role of forest and water resources in climate change adaptation and the importance of capacity-building in sustainable ecosystem management to enhance adaptive capacity. In collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development, the Stockholm Environment Institute in the United States and the Swiss Foundation for Development and International Cooperation, IUCN has developed a community-based risk screening tool for adaptation and livelihoods, which could be used by United Nations agencies in developing their programmes.

It is important that all stakeholders be engaged in the design of the new framework for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation in developing countries. IUCN welcomes the decision adopted at the thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Bali, regarding the integration of reductions into a post-2012 agreement. IUCN believes that the new framework should, among other things, be integrated into a broader strategy focused on securing deeper reductions of emissions from the use of fossil fuels, rather than on simply offsetting carbon emissions.

IUCN welcomes the decision adopted at the thirteenth Conference regarding the establishment of the Adaptation Fund, with equitable representation from developed and developing countries alike. As the Secretary-General emphasized earlier, significant new investments need to be made in financing for adaptation, including resources from multilateral institutions, together with the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility and other sources of multilateral and bilateral financing. Increased adaptation resources could also be raised through a more robust Clean Development Mechanism and philanthropic support.

It is very encouraging to see that the United Nations system is making efforts to harness the capacities of the system to the fullest and intends to align its strengths in a coordinated approach to climate change in order to support the efforts of Member States at the national, regional and global levels in tackling the multifaceted challenge presented by climate change. It is also commendable that efforts are being made to explore ways of making the United Nations more climate-friendly and environmentally sustainable and of developing a climate-neutral approach to United Nations premises and operations that would reduce its own carbon footprint.

Before closing, we would like to commend the work that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has done — and continues to do — to assess on a comprehensive, objective and transparent basis the latest scientific, technical and socio-economic literature relevant to the understanding of the risk of human-induced climate change, its impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation.

IUCN hopes that the United Nations will aim for a comprehensive and equitable post-2012 regime by 2009, with the inclusion of specific mitigation targets with the ultimate objective of preventing dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. We also hope that the necessary support will be provided to all stakeholders for equitable and effective participation in the negotiations that will take place at the 14th Conference of parties to the UNFCCC in Poznan, Poland, this year and at the 15th Conference of parties in Copenhagen in 2009.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/265 of 24 August 1994, I now call on Mr. Robert Shafer, Permanent Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Mr. Shafer (Sovereign Military Order of Malta): The Sovereign Military Order of Malta recognizes the link between environmental health and social well-being and the implicit responsibility of the current generation, the United Nations community included, to secure the health of the planet for future generations. We are not merely consumers of a once seemingly boundless supply of natural resources, but stewards of an environment, which not only is limited in the fruits that it shares, but also sensitive to the way mankind uses those gifts.

As noted by the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, during the informal thematic debate in July and August 2007, climate change is an issue of economic development as much as one of global justice and equality. Inaction on climate change would have serious social and economic implications and would magnify the existing inequalities between developed and developing countries. Projected climate change will exacerbate the occurrence of infectious diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever, and further strain the natural resources necessary for our survival. Widespread prevalence of infectious diseases leads to increasing levels of poverty. Poverty in turn is strongly associated with infectious diseases not typically associated with climate change, such as HIV/AIDS, and in many situations leads to civil unrest.

Members and volunteers of the Order, who live in the service of others, of the poor and the sick, regardless of their race, origin or religion, bear daily witness to that painful cycle and understand that all three aspects must be addressed. The United Nations must strengthen public health planning capacities, including through improved monitoring and evaluation of climate and health impacts; strengthen health systems to enable them to provide protection from climate-related health risks; and adopt a more forward-looking preventative approach to health protection.

The most important cause of the current climate change crisis is human activity and its energy requirements, which is at the heart of this climate agenda. We have allowed it to become an extraordinary crisis, and it therefore demands an extraordinary response from all of us, individually and collectively. True stewardship requires a keen awareness of the environment and challenges us to use our intelligence, ambition and ability to adapt and innovate to discover the Earth's productive potential in an environmentally sustainable way while satisfying our needs. The United Nations must facilitate and motivate that reform of human activity by drawing on its strengths; providing a neutral forum for brokering negotiations; establishing trust and galvanizing high-level political support; and securing participation, engagement and ownership of a broad constituency of Members.

To conclude, sensitivity to the fragility of the only place that humans can call home must be cultivated and nurtured through renewed education in solidarity. Such teachings exalt the principles of respect for one another, for the recognition of that which is great within all of us, even if unseen, and for understanding and patience. With those beliefs, the prospect of delving into a difficult task, such as stemming the tide of environmental destruction brought about through climate change, will be seen as necessary and right in order to preserve a viable home planet for future generations.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3208 (XXIX) of 11 October 1974, I now call on Ms. Maria Spatolisano of the European Community.

Ms. Spatolisano (European Community): 2008 is a crucial year for addressing climate change. By convening this debate of the General Assembly, Mr. President, you offer to all of us a timely opportunity to contribute to making progress in the right direction, for which we thank you.

We know climate change is happening. The evidence is irrefutable and has been piling up for some time. We know that climate change can only be tackled on a world scale and the window of opportunity for action on climate change is closing. The longer we wait to act, the worse the impact of climate change and the greater the challenge.

It is time to move from words to action. A new framework for action must be agreed before the current international commitments under the Kyoto Protocol come to an end in 2012. That requires, first and foremost, a strong political will to tackle this global challenge from the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases.

The European Union's objective is to limit the rise in average global temperatures to two degrees above pre-industrial levels. To send a clear signal to partners around the globe, the European Union took on an independent commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions relative to 1990 levels by at least 20 per cent by the year 2020 and by as much as 30 per cent as part of a global agreement, in which all developed countries commit to comparable efforts and developing countries also contribute.

On 23 January 2008, the European Commission presented the legislative climate action and renewable energy package, which will be instrumental in shaping a response in line with our commitments. The climate action and renewable energy package will enable the European Union to achieve sharp cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and a major increase in renewables through a combination of cost-effective action through the carbon market and a fair sharing of the effort between member States.

Those proposals could make an important contribution to strengthening climate action globally. Allow me to briefly explain how.

First, a new international agreement on climate change is essential. Only global action — under the leadership of developed countries but with a meaningful contribution by emerging economies — can deal effectively with this global challenge. The United Nations climate conference in Bali in December 2007 brought the breakthrough we needed by deciding that a global agreement for the period after 2012 should be reached by the end of 2009. I believe the European Commission's climate action and renewable energy proposals will help the forthcoming negotiations in two main ways.

First, the political importance of leading by example is considerable.

The EU is responsible for approximately 14 per cent of worldwide emissions and this share is falling. Our package has a role to play here. It shows that making the deep emissions cuts necessary to avert dangerous climate changes is fully compatible with continued economic growth and prosperity.

The second way the European Community package could make a useful contribution to an international agreement is through its approach to effort-sharing among different countries. Currently within the EU, there is a 23-fold difference in the average wealth per person between the richest member State and the poorest. The mechanism we devised for our package allows poorer member States to continue growing while they reduce or keep their emissions below the usual level for businesses. We are, in fact, giving practical effect to the international principle of "common but differentiated responsibility".

Let me add that the stakes could not be higher. With world temperatures rising at an accelerated rate, the challenge is not just to reach a post-2012 climate change agreement. It is to ensure that we are ambitious enough to prevent climate change from reaching devastating levels over the coming decades, which could put the lives of millions in danger and impose a crippling burden on our economies.

This brings me to the second point I want to highlight. The climate action and renewable energy proposals of the European Commission take as their starting point the cut of at least 20 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions relative to 1990 and this commitment is unconditional. But it has also put in place the arrangements for scaling up the emissions reduction to as much as 30 per cent, once a global agreement is reached.

We believe that a 30 per cent cut in collective emissions from developed countries is needed by 2020, if we are to have a chance of stopping global warming before it reaches dangerous levels. It is with this responsibility in mind that the EU leaders have endorsed the 30 per cent cut that the EU has argued for in Bali. We will continue arguing for it, as the next necessary step towards an ultimate reduction in global emissions of at least half by 2050.

The package of the Commission foresees that emission reduction targets will be scaled up automatically and proportionally in line with a higher international target. This means we are fully prepared to make a cut of up to 30 per cent by 2020. We also create a strong incentive for third countries to join the future global agreement by proposing that only emission credits from countries that ratify it should be accepted by EU Governments.

My third and final point concerns the European Union's emissions trading scheme. By adopting our independent commitment, the EU is also sending a clear signal to the business community, namely, that the carbon market will continue without interruption. In fighting climate change, we will need to make better use of markets. Emissions trading is the key tool for achieving emission reductions at the lowest cost.

For us, there is no question that the global carbon market must play a central role in a post-2012 climate agreement so as to limit the costs of the deep emission reductions that will need to be made globally. In this respect, public-private partnerships have a major role to play. Public authorities can facilitate the creation of a framework and long-term incentives to attract private investment towards activities that contribute to low-carbon economic development. In fact, the largest share of investment and financial flows for addressing climate change comes from the private sector, namely, 86 per cent, according to the report of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Climate change affects everyone on this planet. For some, it is their very survival that is in question. We are talking about their home, their livelihood, their food and the water they drink; all of that is at stake and the human dimension of the impact of climate changes must be taken into account. But climate change is a worldwide phenomenon. It cannot be overcome by one country or group of countries, no matter how rich or powerful. All major emitters must take action, and all nations must participate in the effort by adopting the right policies in a timely way.

The United Nations has to lead global efforts to address this global challenge. No organization is better suited to dealing with these issues. Climate change is a global problem and requires global solutions. The United Nations family of agencies, funds and programmes is best placed to act in an increasingly coherent manner to support Member States, during both the negotiation and the implementation phases of a new climate change agreement. We welcome, in this respect, the work led by the Chief Executives Board.

We would like to conclude by reaffirming the active support of the European Commission for the multilateral negotiations under the UNFCCC and the United Nations role in this area.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in this thematic debate. At this very late hour, I am afraid I can offer you no more than my closing remarks.

Let me begin by saying how grateful I am to Member States for powerfully articulating a clear message that climate change must remain one of the top priorities of the United Nations. The number of delegations that have spoken, 115 in total, is a testament to the importance of taking immediate practical action to address climate change.

Over the past three days we have heard some compelling reasons why the United Nations should promote integrated partnerships and approaches with all interested stakeholders, in particular the private sector and local authorities, so as to successfully overcome the threat that climate change presents to our way of life.

But this does not mean that, as individuals, we should feel disempowered by the scale of the challenge. Small contributions add up. Many of our speakers, indeed, made the case that we can all make a difference through simple changes in our daily behaviour.

There is a general conviction that has emerged from this debate and the panels. This is, that the actions necessary to address climate change are so intertwined that they can only be tackled through combined efforts.

Long-term targets to reduce carbon emissions must go hand in hand with adapting to the global warming that is already taking place and which could accelerate. We need to do this because we want more growth, more development, but, at the same time, we must also secure our planet and safeguard our future. In support of this approach, there is no doubt among Member States, as demonstrated during the debate, about the nexus of the relations between climate change and sustainable development.

The United Nations Secretariat must now respond by developing policy solutions that can help Member States answer some of the questions that I and others have posed during the debate. For example, we need a better understanding of how to mainstream climate change into nationally owned development strategies; we need clearer advice about how to prepare for a strengthened United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change regime, in particular, clearer guidance to facilitate access to financial resources and investments; we need more comprehensive proposals on how to achieve coherence and promote synergies within the United Nations system in order to close the implementation gap; we need to know how the United Nations can most effectively stimulate financial flows for adaptation, mitigation and climate-resilient development; finally, we also need to know how the United Nations system can best support developing countries in adapting to the inevitable impact of climate change.

The challenge for us now is to implement policies globally that can create low-carbon economies and promote sustainable economic growth and provide incentives for individuals to change behaviour. Member States, regional and multilateral organizations must therefore develop stronger, more mutually supportive partnerships with the private sector. The United Nations, through the Global Compact, already has made a head start to promote more ethical, global corporate leadership.

It is clear that, when leading global businessmen, like Sir Richard Branson and Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City are willing to throw their weight behind the United Nations General Assembly, the private sector and local government take this issue extremely seriously. Moreover, they recognize the contribution that we can make.

By bringing in business creativity and innovation, we have a real opportunity to create a virtuous cycle whereby Member States — providing market incentives and a clear enabling framework for the private sector — bolster confidence in green investment over the long term.

Increasingly, many developed countries are demonstrating their willingness to provide fresh financing and to enhance the critical roles played by international financial institutions and the private sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That is key, because the importance of accelerating technology transfers to developing countries and securing sufficient financing for adaptation and mitigation cannot be underestimated.

In that regard, the General Assembly has sent a clear signal to the World Bank and the donor community to scale up investment in developing countries to support national and international efforts to address climate change. The United Nations system also has a significant role to play in facilitating those goals and Member States' own initiatives on climate change.

Member States recognize that the United Nations is best placed to provide an integrated response to the complementary challenges of addressing climate change and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The system also has an important role in raising awareness globally, generating broad-based support and providing technical cooperation to ensure the full implementation of existing and future agreements under the UNFCCC. To support that process, it is extremely important that Member States work speedily and cooperatively to agree on the principles of a strategic policy framework to steer the United Nations system's activities on climate change.

Finally, I would like to thank all Member States for their insightful contribution to this thematic debate, "Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work". We have heard various comments on the Secretary-General's report. There appears to be a general understanding, however, that further work is necessary.

Given the sense of urgency expressed by many, I propose that, in due course, the Secretary-General provide the General Assembly with a more detailed briefing on efforts to strengthen and coordinate the United Nations activities on climate change. Furthermore, and in order to give continuous consideration to climate change within the General Assembly, I intend to convene two meetings so that we have the opportunity to consider specific aspects of the climate issue in more detail. One will focus on the needs and concerns of vulnerable countries, and the other on corporate responsibility and sustainability.

The General Assembly has concluded its thematic debate entitled "Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work". The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 48, 54 and 116.

The meeting rose at 8.55 p.m.